the weekly Standard

CRUZIN THROUGH NEW HAMPSHIRE
MICHAEL WARREN

KING TRUMP

MATT LABASH
on his glorious life and times

PLUS:

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Contents

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Articles

Features

Books & Arts

COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

Tired Iranians and Other 'Facts'

Readers are well aware of The Scrapbook's attitude toward PolitiFact, the much-admired "fact-checking" watchdog of American politics run by the Poynter Institute for Media Studies in Florida. Under the guise of a journalistic enterprise, PolitiFact is, in truth, a partisan rapid-reaction squad, largely in the service of the Democratic party. There's nothing wrong with that, of course—just as long as everyone understands that PolitiFact's judgments are entirely subjective.

Which is why The Scrapbook tends not to worry too much about correcting PolitiFact's more tendentious observations. That would be comparable to debating Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D.-Fla.) or expecting a serious response from President Obama's press secretary, Josh Earnest.

This past week, however, The Scrapbook's eyebrows were raised involuntarily by PolitiFact. In response to the exchange of Americans held hostage in Tehran for Iranian-Americans convicted of or being prosecuted for violating economic sanctions, Sen. Marco Rubio said that, if elected president, "our adversaries around the world will know that America is no longer under the command of someone weak like Barack Obama, and it will be like Ronald Reagan, where as soon as he took office the hostages were released from Iran."

To which PolitiFact responded with all the fury of the uninformed: "Reagan's inauguration in 1981 may have coincided with the release of the hostages," it declared, "but historians say it did not cause it. . . . Instead, the Iranians had tired of holding the hostages, and . . . the administration of Jimmy Carter did the legwork to get the hostages released."

This is not just untrue, but embarrassingly so. For several months before the release of the hostages in Tehran,

Returning American hostages, 1981

the Carter State Department had been negotiating a ransom deal with the Iranians. But just as Iran released the hostages at the moment Ronald Reagan took the oath of office—in order to humiliate Jimmy Carter one last time—there can be no doubt whatsoever that the Iranians were nervous about dealing with the new president. Indeed, at the time, the *Washington Post* asked, "Who doubts that among Iran's reasons for coming to terms now was a desire to beat [Reagan] to town?"

More troubling to The Scrapbook, however, is PolitiFact's invocation of "historians" to support its ludicrous argument. For the "historian" in question is none other than Gary Sick, the Columbia political scientist who labored on the Carter ransom-negotiation team and later publicized his very own conspiracy theory that the 1980 Reagan-Bush presidential campaign had (secretly!) persuaded Ayatollah Khomeini to keep the hostages imprisoned until after Reagan's election.

Gary Sick's attempt to rationalize his failure is, from a psychiatric standpoint, understandable. Less forgivable was the saturation coverage of Sick's fantasy in the *New York Times* of the day, whose columnist Leslie Gelb (another Carter State Department veteran) accused President George H.W. Bush of "treachery." Or, for that matter, PolitiFact's revival of a now-forgotten, and long since discredited, conspiracy theory.

The Scrapbook, incidentally, has its own idea how this happened. The writers at PolitiFact are staffers at a Florida newspaper called the *Tampa Bay Times*, few of whom seem to have been alive when all this happened. No doubt, they consulted some obsolescent sage at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies, who remembered Gelb's column and its accompanying fairy tale. This is what passes for "fact-checking" in sunny Tampa. ♦

Got a License to Carry That Notepad?

Mike Pitts, a Republican state legislator in South Carolina, last week proposed a law that would require journalists in the state to sign on to a "responsible journalism registry." For anyone who understands the issues at the heart of recent gun control debates, it was obvious the law was more of a satirical "modest proposal" than a serious one. Aside from a flurry of angry and confused tweets by journalists denouncing Pitts's proposal, one *Washington Post* reporter even went so far as to write a column denouncing the proposed law. And indeed, if you swap a few key terms, the *Post* op-ed is a persuasive argument against gun registries. Pitts couldn't have asked for better.

But the swift and vociferous outcry also makes The Scrapbook wonder why reporters have been strangely silent about repeated proposals from Democrats in recent years that would end up making journalism dependent on state approval.

Back in 2009, still reeling from the undercover exposé of the liberal organizing group ACORN by conservative provocateur James O'Keefe, Democratic senators Dick Durbin and Dianne Feinstein tried to legally define who was a journalist so as not to

GETTY IMAGES

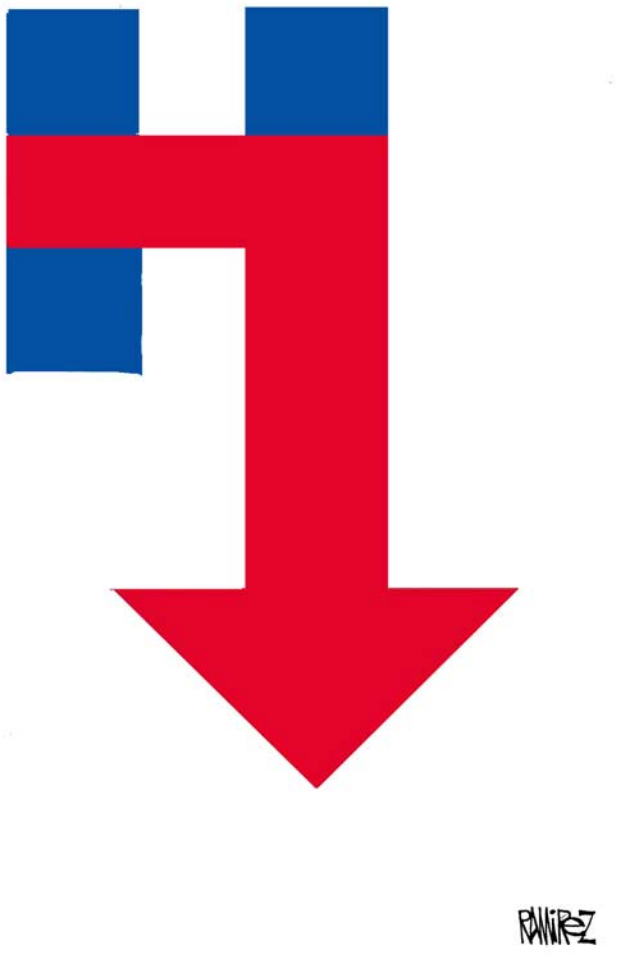
include the likes of O'Keefe. The two drafted a measure that would have left bloggers and ordinary citizens without the same legal protections as journalists and would have stripped those protections from citizens who anonymously report stories. In a fairly Orwellian fashion, they attached this as an amendment to a "press shield" law.

To their credit, some liberal bloggers such as Markos Moulitsas sounded the alarm and the amendment died. But for the most part the media didn't rake Feinstein and Durbin over the coals as they deserved.

Much more recently, on January 14, Planned Parenthood filed suit against the Center for Medical Progress, the pro-life group that last year exposed the organization's appalling and brisk trade in fetal body parts. Planned Parenthood has since changed the way it gets compensated for fetal tissue directly as a result of the group's videos but continues to baselessly insist that the videos were unfair and manipulative. It's suing the Center for Medical Progress in federal court, claiming their undercover investigation violates the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) law. Planned Parenthood wants journalists with opposing views to be treated like gangsters, and yet Planned Parenthood's many media allies have been silent. (Recall that Democratic senator Sheldon Whitehouse wrote a *Washington Post* op-ed last year arguing global warming skeptics should similarly be tried under RICO laws.)

And in the last few Democratic debates, Hillary Clinton has been vocal about wanting to overturn *Citizens United*, the landmark Supreme Court case on campaign finance. This particular case hinged on whether showing a film criticizing Clinton herself would constitute a campaign finance violation. During oral arguments, Obama's deputy solicitor general argued that properly enforcing campaign finance laws might mean banning books, as well as films. In order to enforce the preferred campaign finance regime of many Democrats, the government would have to legally define who has the right to criticize politicians, as well as when and how it's allowable. And yet, liberals claim to be scandalized the High Court found this unconstitutional.

It would be nice to see the media get half as animated about these Democratic outrages as they did about a satirical press law proposed by an obscure Republican state legislator. ♦



Details, Details

The Scrapbook has been secretly rooting for Bernie Sanders for a while now, because, well, he's not Hillary Clinton. However, we are not without serious reservations about his candidacy. Many of his policy proposals reveal the rich fantasy life of the left, and not even the *New York Times* can conceal this fact. Sanders recently released more details on his single-payer health plan, and the paper of record found that his "Health Plan Is More of a Tax Plan." Indeed, Sanders would create "a special income tax, called a premium, increase payroll taxes and raise a variety of taxes on high-income Americans, including income and capital gains taxes," observes the *Times*.

Under Sanders's plan, Americans wouldn't have to pay (directly) for anything related to health care. No copays, deductibles, or any out-of-pocket

Bernie Sanders peddling nostrums

costs. Oh, and Sanders's plan would also pick up the tab for vision, dental, hearing, and long-term and palliative care. By some estimates, Sanders's "free" health care plan would cost $28 trillion in additional federal spending over the next 10 years.

Sanders, of course, insists it would save money, but how it would he doesn't say. "A lot of important details have been left out," writes the *Times*. "Here are some things it doesn't say: What would the new system pay doctors and hospitals for their services? How would it decide which medical treatments it should and shouldn't cover? What strategies would it use to contain health care costs and keep the system affordable? Who would make the decisions, big and small, about how the program would work?"

The *Times* then sought clarification from Gerald Friedman, an economics professor at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, who ran the numbers on the plan for the Sanders campaign. They asked him, among other things, how Sanders's plan will supposedly lower the cost of physician services by almost 11 percent. Friedman's response to the *Times* was, much like Sanders's health care plan, priceless. "The pleasure of being an academic is I can just spell things out and leave the details to others," he said. "The details very quickly get very messy." ♦

Gimme, Gimme, Gimme

NEWSCOM

Since the arrival of Christmas break and J-Term, the screaming campus hordes of November have largely gone the way of summer soldiers and sunshine patriots. The dropping temperatures transform outdoor protests into events suitable only for those of the most iron resolve. Still, there are developments ongoing behind the scenes. The Scrapbook has obtained, for instance, a copy of the list of demands, or rather, the "Final Report" of the University of California-Irvine's task force on "ensuring a positive climate for the campus's African-American community."

The race-busters' report includes the usual laundry list of minor grievances, along with demands to hire black "program coordinators" from the previous year's graduating class. The most pressing demand is for the creation of a political education curriculum "developed and overseen" by Dr. Frank B. Wilderson III. Being somewhat cynical, The Scrapbook supposes Dr. Wilderson may have had a role in crafting the document.

But wait—there's more. The task force also wants to rename a floor in one of the university's buildings the "Academic Excellence-Black Scholars" floor. And to create a dedicated housing assistant for the "African-American Studies Theme House." Is a theme house like a theme park? The Scrapbook doesn't know, nor does it understand why it would be "untenable" for the head of a such a house to simultaneously head the "Humanities House." Would that mean one less new job created?

But it doesn't end there. The students "DEMAND" (the report periodically lapses into all-caps) that the administration create a "retention center" for black students. The center should supply free "printing, scantrons, blue books, course textbooks, writing materials, computers, projectors, whiteboards," and so forth. Apparently the task force believes black students are unable to acquire their own school supplies.

Taxpayers and other students, it is well to remember, would be on the hook for the higher costs that would come from meeting all such demands. The Scrapbook wonders if microaggressions are just another excuse for macrosubsidies. ♦

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BPA WORLDWIDE

Black Ice

Sometimes in January, often in February—always somewhere in the course of the winter—I feel it settling down on me and the season: that icy fog that dulls the senses, the cold that gnaws the bone, the sadness that deadens the will.

A form of "seasonal affective disorder," I've been told such winter depressions are called: a vitamin D deficiency caused by lack of sunshine, maybe, or a rise in melatonin during the shortened daylight hours. Possibly a lack of serotonin. No one knows for sure. But the cure, they say, involves getting outside a little whenever the winter days are bright. Set up an indoor lightbox, buy a bedroom air ionizer, and it'll go away soon enough. Soon enough, they say.

There's a lake in the hills north of my house—a small reservoir held in place by the steep red-cliff walls of the canyon that wraps around it. And the snow is always pretty there, when it first falls: a soft fluff, drifting gently down. The snow always seems to offer an uplift of spirit, however difficult it makes the drive back home. But then, over the next day or two, the wind does its work. The afternoon sun casts the long shadows of the cliff-top trees across the ice. And, swept clear of the sparkling snow, the actual surface of the lake can be known for what it is.

There in the shadows, a hard darkness locks the water down for the winter, and to see that black ice is to realize just how far down the sunless cold goes. That's the trouble with the usual explanations and purported cures that people offer for the despondency of winter. They just don't see the depth of the darkness. They seem to think that pretty snow is the norm, and black ice an aberration.

But to those who have the experience, melancholy doesn't feel biochemical. It feels metaphysical—a sadness in the world. To call it "seasonal affective disorder" is already to miss the truth of it. The sadness doesn't come to the mind as a disorder of perceptual affect. It comes as a fault in reality itself: a dimming of things in themselves. *Unwarmed by any sunset light*, as James Greenleaf Whittier wrote, *The gray day darkened into night*.

JORI BOLTON

That poem, "Snow-Bound," was once as famous as a piece of American literature could be, although I have the sense it's not much read anymore. And perhaps for good reason. With his opening images of the days after a heavy storm in rural New England, Whittier paints a picture of fantastical shapes of snow and ice that decorate what is in truth a graveyard landscape. Winter is death, both a sign and a cause of mortality. And the lure of death in the icy purity of the season is held at bay only by the stories read aloud to one another by the snowbound family, in their iron determination not to succumb to the deadliness of the season.

Whittier's "Snow-Bound" is hardly the only poem to describe winter this way. Look, for example, at Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," another poem as famous as an American work can be. And, unlike Whittier's poem, it's still widely read, I think—albeit often misread as something sweet and cheery. For Frost, the snowy woods are mesmerizing, there at the darkest evening of the year, and only the need to keep his promises prevents the poet from embracing the cold sleep for which he yearns.

"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" is a suicide poem, in other words. Or, at least, a poem about the lure of the grave, so lovely, dark, and deep, in winter. And what explanation of medicine and biochemistry would answer Frost? What would convince him that the world is actually fine and "affective disorder" is only in his head?

Work especially hard through Thanksgiving, to compensate for the coming days of inactivity. Travel to the warmer south, if the money can be found to manage it. Read stacks of easy genre fiction, just to fill the day—these are things we have learned to do, who live in winter's country. And all that, combined with a will not to abandon responsibilities, usually carries us through to the promised spring.

But the black ice beneath the snow remains the truth of winter—honest cold, without the pretense that it's only a matter of affect. And the dark disorder we discern: It is the cold world's fault, not just the mind's.

Joseph Bottum

the weekly Standard

The Nominee We Deserve?

Do Republicans deserve to lose? Consider the state of play as we write this in late January, just days from the first GOP nominating contests.

The Republican frontrunner is a longtime liberal whose worldview might best be described as an amalgam of pop-culture progressivism and vulgar nationalism. His campaign rallies are orgies of self-absorption, dominated by juvenile insults of those who criticize him and endless boasting about his poll numbers. He's a narcissist and a huckster, an opportunist who not only failed to join conservatives in the big fights about the size and scope of government over the past several decades but, to the extent he was even aware of such battles, was often funding the other side, with a long list of contributions to the liberals most responsible for the dire state of affairs in the country, including likely Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

In short, he's an opposition researcher's dream. But Republicans have spent tens of millions of dollars on political advertising this cycle and virtually none of it has targeted Donald Trump. He is poised to glide into the early-state contests having largely avoided the kind of sustained paid-media attacks that bring down candidates with far fewer vulnerabilities.

Where is that money going? Much of it has been spent to attack Marco Rubio—more than $22 million since December 1, according to a Republican source who tracks campaign spending. Rubio defeated incumbent governor Charlie Crist for the Senate in 2010 as an anti-establishment, Tea Party candidate in Florida and won praise from across the GOP as the future of the Republican party and the face of modern conservatism. "You want conservative purity," said Rush Limbaugh on September 7, 2011. "I'll give it to you: Marco Rubio, who is someday going to be president of the United States." Limbaugh was at least half right. Over his time in Congress, Rubio has earned a 98 percent rating from the American Conservative Union.

His one moment of apostasy, if you want to call it that, came on immigration. But even there Rubio's position at its core was very close to those held by other conservatives: Sean Hannity called for a "pathway to citizenship" after the 2012 elections, and Ted Cruz favored a pathway to legalization or at least repeatedly made that argument. Even Trump, whose rise is often attributed to his restrictionist immigration views, in 2013 pronounced himself open to "amnesty" after the border was secured.

So here we are. The Republican frontrunner, a non-conservative longtime Democrat, is waltzing into GOP nominating contests largely untouched by GOP paid media. And the candidate long viewed as the party's brightest hope for the future has been the subject of relentless negative ads.

Who is to blame? Virtually everyone.

First, the establishment. That descriptor has been so widely used this cycle as to render it virtually meaningless. Tea Party darling Marco Rubio is widely seen as competing in the "establishment lane" of the GOP primary. Trump supporters have labeled as "establishment" groups that were founded to challenge the Republican establishment—Club for Growth and Heritage Action, to name just two. And now Ted Cruz is accusing Trump himself of representing the Republican establishment.

But there is an actual establishment—risk-averse Republican donors and consultants, mercenary GOP-leaning lobbyists, and feckless congressional leadership. And this establishment deserves considerable blame for the current state of affairs. There are dozens of examples. But the origins of the fight over government funding and Obamacare from 2013 are instructive.

On July 17 of that year, Senator Mike Lee gave a speech on the Senate floor. The White House was calling for a delay in the implementation of two key elements of Obamacare—the employer mandate and verification of eligibility for subsidies on health care exchanges. Lee's argument was simple: If the Obama administration cannot implement the law, Congress shouldn't fund it. He proposed a big fight on a big issue, one where public opinion was squarely on the side of Republicans. It was a fight Republicans could win even if they lost. By elevating the issue and highlighting the deep problems with Obamacare, Republicans could at least force Democrats to retrench and vigorously defend it. And if Republicans stuck together, perhaps they could pick off a few wavering Democrats up for reelection in 2014.

Lee drafted a letter with Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio and circulated it among their colleagues in the Senate. One after another they signed it—conservatives and moderates alike—and even two members of Senate GOP leadership. And then, suddenly, everything changed. Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell didn't want the fight and enlisted his deputies to kill the effort. Within days, five signatories asked for their names to be removed, and the whole thing collapsed.

It was a profile in cowardice. There were others: the fiscal cliff, the Export-Import Bank, the farm bill, the transporta-

tion reauthorization, the recent omnibus. Senate Republicans even quietly removed Paul Ryan's entitlement reforms from their most recent budget proposal, despite the fact that every senator up in 2016 has voted in favor of them before.

Perhaps it didn't make sense to engage on all of these fights, with Barack Obama still sitting comfortably in the White House. But was it too much to have a real battle on just one of them? To think strategically? To challenge the White House with something other than press releases?

The roots of our current discontent lie here. And conservatives are right to be angry. But the establishment does not shoulder the blame alone. As one conservative strategist told us: "Leadership is to blame for never identifying any hill worth dying on," but critics of the establishment "are to blame for only being interested in dying."

To put it another way: If the establishment is responsible for the conditions that led to Donald Trump, many critics of the establishment are responsible for making him the frontrunner. Since Trump entered the race, these voices—on television, on talk radio, in Congress, even in the Republican presidential field—amplified his craziness. They rationalized his vulgarity, explained away his insults, ignored his lies, even celebrated his ignorance.

Mock a war hero? Trump isn't politically correct! Ban every Muslim? The man has a point! Embrace a Russian dictator who kills his political opponents and journalists? Trump being Trump! Belittle the looks of a female opponent? He'll be tough on Hillary! Ridicule a reporter with a disability? Finally someone who stands up to the liberal media! Nuclear triad? Hezbollah versus Hamas? Quds Force or the Kurds? He'll hire people who know these things!

Some of those who have championed Trump have become true believers. Rush Limbaugh said last week that the rise of Trump means "nationalism and populism have overtaken conservatism in terms of appeal." For others, he was a means to an end. Mark Levin, who was more a Trump defender than a Trump booster, has become a harsh critic, accusing Trump of practicing "crony capitalism" and "taking the low road" in his attacks on Ted Cruz. Last week, Levin tweeted: "Based on what you've observed today & the last few days, do you believe Trump's a reliably solid conservative?"

Cruz himself praised Trump for months despite the fact that they were rivals. "He's bold and brash, and he's willing to speak the truth. And he's taking on the Washington cartel," Cruz proclaimed in an interview on *Hannity* last July. But now, with the first Republican nominating contests just days away, Cruz is making the polar opposite critique. "Donald Trump said just yesterday that the problem with me is that I wouldn't go to Washington to make a deal and go along to get along with the Democrats," Cruz said. "If you're looking for someone who's a

DOL Rule Would Limit Small Business Retirement Plans

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Today, 99% of employers in the United States are small businesses, responsible for 63% of new private sector jobs. To compete with larger companies and attract employees, small businesses need affordable retirement savings plans. They need more convenient, cost-effective ways to contribute to their employees' retirement—not less. But a proposal by the Department of Labor (DOL) could actually limit small businesses' access to retirement services or lock them out of the retirement market altogether.

DOL's flawed fiduciary rule would require advisers who work with small businesses to establish retirement savings plans to be fiduciaries. Being a fiduciary creates new compliance hurdles and expands the types of communications that are considered "investment advice" subject to more regulation. That would restrict the advice that financial experts can share with small businesses and employees, raise costs, limit plan options, and perhaps even drive advisers out of this market.

The rule assumes that small businesses and investors aren't sophisticated enough and need to be protected. Small businesses do deserve protections and have them under current law. What they need is more and better advice and fewer obstacles to providing retirement benefits. Armed with clear information and sound recommendations, they can and will make good decisions.

But DOL believes that the government knows best. The department wants to take over retirement plans because it thinks it can do a better job than the private sector. The truth is the DOL rule would end up hurting the small businesses and workers it is intended to protect. Imagine that—a government takeover that results in unintended consequences that actually leave people worse off.

In fact, this government overreach would make investing more confusing without actually fixing the problem DOL purports to solve. The fiduciary rule would create no fewer than six different standards for investment advice and services, adding new complexity. Moreover, it's contradictory. An adviser marketing to a large retirement plan—one with 100 plan participants or more—would not be considered a fiduciary under the rule, but an adviser marketing to a small plan would be. Where's the sense in that?

Currently, 12.3 million American investors hold less than $25,000 in their retirement accounts. Millions more should be saving, but they simply aren't because no one is explaining to them how they can easily do so. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is joining 310 bipartisan members of Congress and 460 small businesses, local chambers, and associations and urging DOL to fix the fiduciary rule. Without changes, the rule will make the problem worse—not solve it.

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dealmaker, who'll capitulate even more to the Democrats, who'll give in to Chuck Schumer, Harry Reid, and Nancy Pelosi, then perhaps Donald Trump is your man."

Did Cruz badly misjudge Trump? Or did he know all along that he was boosting an unprincipled dealmaker? If it's the former, what does that say about Cruz's judgment? If it's the latter, what does it say about Cruz's scruples?

There's much to like about Cruz. He's smart, he's articulate, he's a nimble debater, and he's made clear time and again that he doesn't care at all what the *New York Times* editorial board thinks of him.

There may be even more to like about Marco Rubio. He is among the best communicators in American politics. He is an instinctive, visceral conservative who doesn't need a focus group to understand how to speak to conservatives. But his appeal isn't limited to Republicans. Rubio all along has looked like the strongest general election candidate in the Republican field—the only conservative who has a chance, at least, to put in play states that haven't been competitive in recent presidential elections.

Rubio is currently third in national polling at 11.6 percent of the GOP primary vote, well behind Trump (34.8) and Cruz (18.8). Current polling puts him third in Iowa, fourth in New Hampshire, and third in South Carolina. Given the length of the coming delegate contest, the suddenly harsh attacks between Trump and Cruz, and the volatility of the Republican primary electorate, it would be foolish to write off any candidate, much less one as talented as Rubio.

But if the polls stay as they are and if Donald Trump becomes the Republican nominee, then Republicans surely deserve their fate. And that would be a shame. Because Democrats—whose seven years of activist government at home and weakness abroad have left the country in crisis, and who will nominate either an avowed socialist or a failed secretary of state under investigation for mishandling classified information, a woman who is one of the least trusted public figures in America—surely don't deserve to win.

—Stephen F. Hayes

The Confidence Man

Depicted by masters of American literature from Herman Melville to Mark Twain to Donald Westlake, cropping up in real life in each epoch of our great hustling and bustling and grasping commercial republic, the confidence man is a primordial American type. Many accounts treat him with some affection, as an understandable (if deformed and ultimately deplorable) product of the boredom and excesses of complacent bourgeois life, a figure who livens up our often dreary and earnest landscape. Vulgarian and climber, braggart and charlatan, he tends to be portrayed as pretty harmless in the big scheme of things, someone who does limited damage to the republic as a whole—though of course he can impoverish individuals and damage communities that get in his way. Matt Labash's 1999 portrayal of Donald Trump in this magazine (with the apt headline "A Chump on the Stump") fits into this genre of portraits that combine disdain and affection for their colorful subjects.

But when the time for comedy or irony or even philosophy is over, when things that matter hang in the balance, the con man is supposed to fail. Even if he doesn't fail in the narrow sense—even if he makes a lot of money, pulls off scams and stays a step ahead of the law, and watches his children become respectable pillars of the community—he isn't supposed to succeed in upending our politics or endangering our future. To quote Winston Churchill, who had a rich appreciation for comedy and irony and even philosophy: "Politics is not a game. It is an earnest business."

The good news is the confidence man hasn't generally succeeded here. The Founders' institutions, the Tocquevillean mores, the religious traditions, and the common sense of the people have on the whole preserved and protected our political health. We have usually succeeded in distinguishing reality from reality show. We have most often understood that governing isn't branding. Our presidents have been a mixed lot, but no true tin-pot Caesar has yet occupied the Oval Office.

So we have had no periods of Latin American-style banana republic to besmirch our republic's annals. We have on the whole managed not to permit European-style waves of populism wholly to overwhelm our constitutional forms. We have not allowed the cheap nationalism of lesser countries to supplant our robust patriotism. All in all, the United States of America has been an exceptional nation.

Until now? Is Rush Limbaugh right, that "Nationalism and populism have overtaken conservatism in terms of appeal"? And is he right that American conservatives have nothing to do in response but step aside and usher in their European and Latin American-style successors? Are the politics of Latin America and Europe to be our new normal? Are today's conservatives supposed to appease and make their peace with such politics? Is the task of today's American conservatism to normalize Trump and Trumpism?

Surely not.

—William Kristol

Trump on the Stump

With The Donald in Iowa.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Trump shakes hands at the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls, January 12, 2016.

JOE RAEDLE / GETTY IMAGES

Cedar Falls, Iowa

Before Donald Trump takes the stage in Northern Iowa University's gymnasium, a woman he once fired tries to convince the crowd of 1,000 that Trump's victory is inevitable. "Hop aboard the Trump train. 'Cause let me tell you what, folks. We are going places. And we are going places fast. And we are steamrolling anyone that gets in the way of our next stop, and that is the White House," Tana Goertz, Trump's Iowa co-chair and a runner-up on Trump's reality-TV show *The Apprentice*, says to fire up the assembly.

Trump is not unstoppable, but says he will be if he takes the state. "If we win Iowa, I think we'll run the table," he tells the crowd in Cedar Falls. He might not be wrong. Trump is running neck-and-neck with Texas senator Ted Cruz in Iowa polls, but he has double-digit leads in New Hampshire and South Carolina. A setback in Iowa could wipe out those leads, but the momentum provided by a victory could very well make them grow. It's possible that early Trump victories would spark a concerned backlash, but it's just as likely an increasing number of Republicans would fall in line.

What's clear in Iowa with 10 days left until caucus night is that the race remains very fluid. According to the latest *Des Moines Register* poll, which found Cruz leading Trump 25 to 22 percent with Florida senator Marco Rubio in third place at 12 percent, more than a third of Trump's supporters and more than half of all likely caucusgoers say they could still be persuaded to back a different candidate. Indeed, for every committed Trump supporter I meet at Trump's Iowa events, I meet another likely voter who hasn't made up his mind.

Don Ertl, who has participated in every caucus since 1976, left Trump's Cedar Falls rally still undecided. "I'm either for Trump or Cruz," he says. How will he make up his mind? "Flip a coin. I don't know. Maybe I have to talk to Ted again."

Kevin Mankin waited outside the John Wayne Museum in Winterset for an hour in 14-degree weather to catch a glimpse of Trump, but he walked away still torn 50-50 between Trump and Cruz. "I'll have to do some soul-searching," he says. A Scott Walker supporter until the Wisconsin governor dropped out, Mankin likes that Trump is "not part of the establishment," but says his "biggest fear" is that Trump's "an egotistical rich successful man that's looking for publicity. And that's the only reason I'm not 100 percent behind him."

Several other undecided likely caucusgoers complained that Trump doesn't offer much of a policy agenda. "I'd like to hear more specifics," Susie from Clive told me after she attended Trump's Ames rally with former vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin. "I've never heard one specific out of him. It's just, 'We're gonna do it. We're going to get it done.'" At the Palin rally, Trump promised he would localize education. "How?" shouted one man in the crowd. "Just you watch," Trump replied.

There's a growing sense of fear—or resignation—among Trump's Republican opponents that attacks on him simply won't work because almost all his supporters are mindlessly backing him and impervious to new information that could dissuade them from voting for him. But that's simply not true.

Attacks on Trump haven't failed so much as they haven't been tried. After six months of praising Trump as "terrific," Cruz finally turned on Trump in the January 15 debate. In response to Trump's accusation that Cruz is not a natural-born citizen because of his Canadian birth, Cruz attacked Trump's "New York values." Trump's liberal views, past and present, on a variety of issues are certainly a vulnerability. But Trump may have gotten the better of the exchange because

John McCormack is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

he crudely but effectively portrayed Cruz's words as an attack on 9/11 victims and rescue workers.

Cruz didn't follow through on the vague "New York values" attack with TV ads. And neither did anyone else. "Literally, zero dollars in super PAC advertising have been run against [Trump] this month," the *Washington Examiner*'s David Drucker reported January 20. All the other Republican candidates remain interested in attacking anyone other than Trump.

For two weeks, from January 9 to January 23, Cruz didn't hold a single event in Iowa as he campaigned in South Carolina and New Hampshire. Meanwhile, Trump has been shoring up his image among Christian conservatives. On January 18, Trump spoke at Liberty University, where Cruz launched his campaign. University president Jerry Falwell Jr. praised Trump for living "a life of loving and helping others, as Jesus taught in the Great Commandment."

Trump is the "only candidate," Falwell said, who "cannot be bought. He's not a puppet on a string like many other candidates." Falwell denounced politicians who pandered to Christians during elections only to betray them in office. When Trump spoke, he declared, "If I'm president you're going to see 'Merry Christmas' in department stores. Believe me. Believe me."

On January 19, Sarah Palin endorsed Trump at the rally in Ames. Palin said that Trump would fight "crony capitalism." Earlier that day, Trump appeared at the Renewable Fuels Summit, where he read a statement of support for government mandates to boost the ethanol industry. Palin said that Trump is "pro-life." In December, Trump wouldn't say if he opposes *Roe* v. *Wade*, and he flip-flopped to come out against third-trimester abortion only recently. Palin literally screeched that Trump would "kick ISIS ass!" In the September 16 debate, Trump asked, "Why are we fighting ISIS in Syria? Let them fight each other and pick up the remnants." Palin said Trump "spent his life with the workin' man." To build Trump Tower, the businessman relied on 200 illegal Polish immigrants who later accused Trump of cheating them out of wages. "We worked in horrid, terrible conditions," one told the *New York Times*.

There's much, much more material than that to use against Trump in a GOP primary. But when I ask Representative Steve King of Iowa, Cruz's national campaign co-chair, for the best reasons against voting for Trump, he replies: "I'm not going to make those arguments against Donald Trump." The next day, Trump said at an event in Norwalk, Iowa, that Cruz was more deceitful than Hillary Clinton because he didn't file an FEC report for a Goldman Sachs loan. "He said with him being a Canadian citizen, 'Oh, I didn't know that.' How did he not know that?" Trump asked. "Then he said with the loans, 'Oh, I didn't know that.' Smart guy. He doesn't know that? Yeah, that's worse than Hillary, when you think about it."

'Literally, zero dollars in super PAC advertising have been run against [Trump] this month,' says the *Washington Examiner*'s David Drucker. All the other Republican candidates remain interested in attacking anyone other than Trump.

Many caucusgoers may remain persuadable, but what's going to persuade them not to vote for Trump if they don't hear much of a case against him? Some Republican operatives have suggested that certain of Trump's fans, who would be first-time caucusgoers, simply won't show up on February 1. But the Trump campaign is working hard to make sure that they do.

"Is there anyone here that is new to the caucus process?" Iowa state senator Brad Zaun asks the crowd in Cedar Falls. Quite a few hands shoot up. "It doesn't matter," Zaun reassures them. "All the rallies that I've went to, there's so many Democrats, so many independents. You can show up at the caucus on February first and you can switch to a Republican. That allows you to vote Mr. Trump."

The latest *Des Moines Register* poll found that 2016 would be the first caucus for 29 percent of likely Republican caucusgoers. "The only time we saw it higher was the final poll in 2008," says J. Ann Selzer, the well-respected pollster who conducts the *DMR* survey. In 2008, Barack Obama turned out thousands of young people and liberals as the share of first-time caucusgoers spiked to 57 percent.

Many of Trump's supporters may not be traditional Republican voters, but Trump argues it's crazy to think they will stand in the cold to attend his rallies but won't show up on caucus night. It's a fair point. Tim Miller, a middle-aged ironworker, didn't caucus in 2008 or 2012 or even vote in either general election. He says the Cedar Falls event is his third Trump rally this year and he's certain to caucus. "He doesn't need PAC money or anything," Miller says when asked why he's backing Trump. "He's not a bought-and-paid-for politician." The Trump campaign collects the email address of every rallygoer, and Miller says he receives messages daily from the Trump campaign.

This remains a tight race between Cruz and Trump in the polls, and the January 28 debate could swing it one way or the other. "Things tend to be on the fluid side in Iowa," says Selzer. "We look at more candidates than any other state. There's no real upside to locking in all that early. You're going to go to a caucus where your neighbors will talk to you about who they're supporting and why they're supporting them. Iowans tend to be a little more open up till the very, very end."

Selzer says that as something of a warning to prognosticators: Even a candidate other than Cruz or Trump could win. In 2012, Iowa victor Rick Santorum was polling in the single digits two weeks before the caucuses. "Anything can happen in that pack of candidates," she says. "It is impossible as a person who pays attention to the numbers and history to write anybody off." ♦

Cruzin' Through New Hampshire

Five Ted talks in one day. BY MICHAEL WARREN

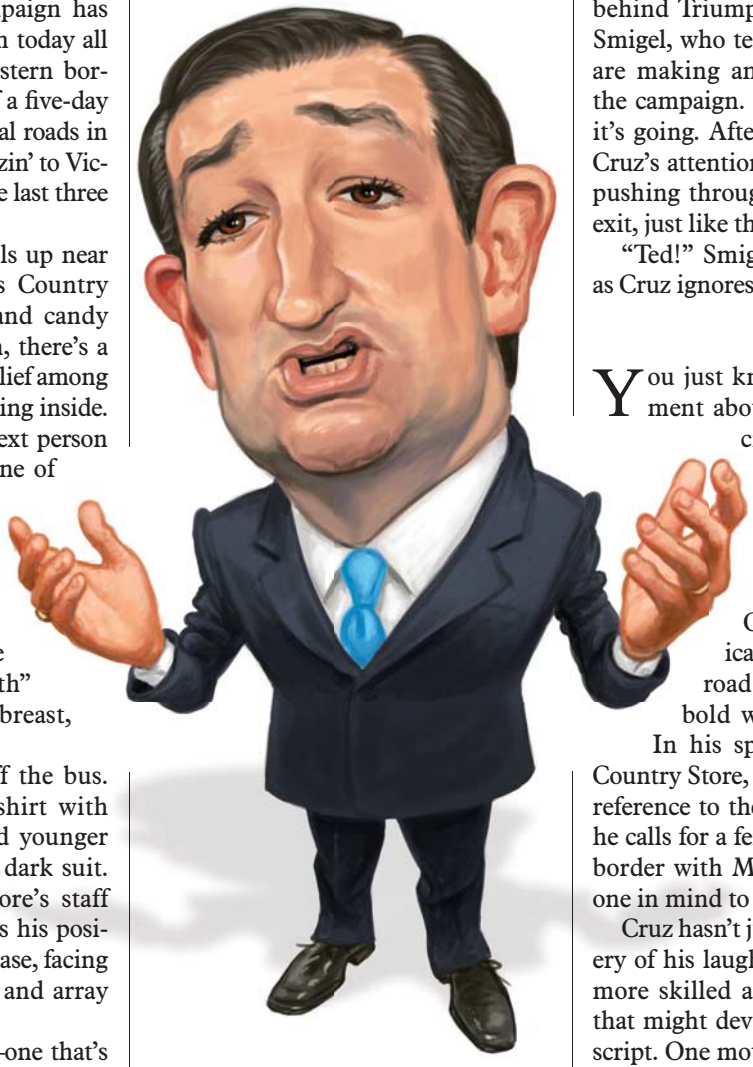
North Conway, N.H.

Ted Cruz is running late. This is not a good start for the Texas senator, whose campaign has scheduled six events for him today all along New Hampshire's eastern border. Cruz is in the middle of a five-day tour, rambling down the rural roads in a bus emblazoned with "Cruzin' to Victory" and "Trusted," with the last three letters—T-E-D—in red.

When the bus at last pulls up near the front window of Zeb's Country Store, a charming kitsch and candy shop in this ski-resort town, there's a mixture of excitement and relief among the voters and reporters waiting inside. That dissipates when the next person to walk in isn't Cruz but one of his chief advocates here, former senator Bob Smith. "Who's that?" a few voters murmur. But Smith, who left the Senate in 2003, is donning a pullover with the words "Senator Bob Smith" embroidered on the left breast, which helps clear things up.

Finally, Cruz bounds off the bus. Wearing a blue tattersall shirt with jeans, he looks thinner and younger than in his usual ill-fitting dark suit. After a photo with the store's staff behind the counter, he takes his position at the bottom of a staircase, facing outward toward the crowd and array of TV cameras.

Cruz opens with a joke—one that's been floating around online for years—about an old man at the front gate of the White House in the days after the end of Barack Obama's term. The man asks a Marine every day if Obama is there, and the Marine, increasingly frustrated, keeps telling the man Obama is no longer president. When the Marine finally points out the man's been asking the same question and getting the same answer—"Barack Obama is no longer president"—the man smiles and says, "I just like hearing you say it."



This gets a big laugh and a round of applause. Cruz has gotten better at showing his lighter side. It no doubt helps that he repeats the same jokes, with nearly the same cadences, at every stop. Another favorite is his truism that the only difference between federal regulators and locusts is you can't use pesticide on the regulators. In Cruz's telling, a West Texas farmer once shot back, "Wanna bet?"

But Cruz isn't the only funnyman in the room. Near the back, TV's Triumph the Insult Comic Dog, the vulgar cigar-chomping hand puppet, perches himself on the shoulder of a voter. The creator, hand, and voice behind Triumph is comedian Robert Smigel, who tells me he and his crew are making an online special about the campaign. It's not clear how well it's going. After trying in vain to get Cruz's attention, Smigel is reduced to pushing through a scrum toward the exit, just like the rest of us.

"Ted!" Smigel-as-Triumph shouts, as Cruz ignores him. "Ted!"

Freedom, N.H.

You just knew he'd make a comment about it. "This town officially wins the contest for the best-named city in the country," says Cruz.

Freedom is half an hour south of North Conway. The only political sign to be seen on the road to Freedom reads, in bold white letters: TRUMP.

In his speech at the Freedom Country Store, Cruz makes an oblique reference to the leading candidate, as he calls for a fence along the southern border with Mexico. "I've got someone in mind to build it," he says.

Cruz hasn't just improved the delivery of his laugh lines. He's becoming more skilled at answering questions that might deviate from his preferred script. One mother here brings up the divisive partisanship in Washington during the Obama years. What would Cruz do, she wanted to know, to "heal us as a nation?"

Cruz looks down as she speaks and shakes his head. Obama, he laments, "could have been a unifying president."

"Remember when he spoke at the

DAVE CLEGG

Michael Warren is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

2004 Democratic convention, he said we're not red states or blue states, we are the United States of America," Cruz says, and the woman nods. "That sentiment an awful lot of us agree with. But sadly, when he got elected that sentiment disappeared. And we've had seven years of a president that it seems almost every day seeks to tear us apart and divide us, whether it's turning us against each other on racial lines, on ethnic lines, on socio-economic lines, on gender lines, on religious lines, and that is wrong. We need a president who, number one, appeals to our shared values."

A shot at Obama, yes, but also a subtle rebuke of Trump. Despised by his Senate colleagues for his divisive reputation, Cruz remarkably is now positioning himself as a reasonable and principled uniter.

After a few questions and failed attempts by Triumph to get the candidate's attention, Cruz's personal aide Bruce Redden taps the senator on his right leg, just above his knee. Cruz announces he'll take one more question. In the middle of a lengthy answer about the national debt, Redden taps Cruz's left leg, this time below his knee, to indicate it's time to wrap it up. He ends by asking the crowd to "pray," a request better suited to Iowa evangelicals than the more secular crowd here.

"Pray that you commit today each and every day between now and Election Day to lift this country up in prayer," Cruz says. "Just say, Father God, please, continue this awakening that is sweeping this country. Pull us back from the abyss." Some of the voters look a little skeptical.

Sanbornville, N.H.

By now, Cruz is at least 45 minutes behind schedule. The tiny restaurant where he's speaking is so packed no one can get in the front door. Standing outside in the freezing cold are two college-aged volunteers for Marco Rubio's campaign, handing out pocket calculators and some literature calling Cruz a "political calculator." I've seen better campaign stunts.

Bob Smith has arrived long before Cruz, and it's his role to keep the waiting crowd entertained. After running through more than enough half-amusing anecdotes and testaments to Cruz's greatness, an awkward silence falls over the restaurant. Suddenly, Smith blurts out that he can do a pretty good Bill Clinton impression.

"I did not have sexual relations with that woman," he says in Bubba's drawl. He wasn't joking: It's pretty good, and it has the room laughing. Smith is clearly enjoying the new burst of energy he's created.

"I can do Strom Thurmond, too!" Smith says. Oh boy. Even the press, who have heard Cruz's stump speech countless times, are relieved when the candidate shows up to deliver it again.

In his characteristic bombast, Cruz lists the five things he'll achieve on his first day in office: rescind Obama's executive orders, instruct the Justice Department to investigate and prosecute Planned Parenthood, inform every branch of the federal government to stop persecution of religious liberty, rip the Iranian nuclear deal "to shreds," and move the American embassy in Israel to Jerusalem.

"And that's Day One," Cruz says. "There are 365 days in a year. Four years in a presidential term. Four years in a second term." By the end of his two terms, Cruz adds, members of the media will be "checking themselves into therapy." I'm wondering where Triumph is.

Center Barnstead, N.H.

Another small New Hampshire town, another little shop full of voters. Cruz's entourage has grown as we've driven south, with national reporters like Fox News's alliterative duo, Bret Baier and Carl Cameron, joining up. Cruz is finishing a radio interview on his bus, and Smith has started with the Clinton impression again. That's my cue to head outside, where the 19-degree temperature and biting wind are more bearable.

On the street, a rumor has taken hold: Cruz will take a few questions from the press outside the shop. The media horde moves, amoeba-like, to surround the bus doors, where it waits. And waits. And waits. The press blob is starting to shake from the cold. A staffer inside the bus snaps a photo of the shivering media outside. The Cruz campaign will enjoy that one.

Finally Cruz steps out to get bombarded with questions. Terry Branstad, the governor of Iowa, had said he wants Cruz to lose the caucuses because of his opposition to ethanol subsidies. "Like *The Empire Strikes Back*, the establishment will strike back because they don't want an end to the cronyism and the gravy train from Washington," Cruz says. Is he saying Iowa corn farmers are crony capitalists? "I'm saying Iowa corn farmers are wonderful Americans," Cruz responds.

What about the rumors, soon to be confirmed by the *New York Times*, that Sarah Palin would be endorsing Donald Trump? "I love Sarah Palin. Sarah Palin is fantastic. Without her friendship and support, I wouldn't be in the Senate," Cruz says. "Regardless of what Sarah decides to do in 2016, I will always remain a big fan of Sarah Palin."

The mini-press conference over, Cruz heads inside.

Rye, N.H.

The Rubio volunteers are back, with reinforcements. They're holding up signs and still handing out calculators. Former Massachusetts senator Scott Brown is walking toward them with a police officer, asking the cop to get the protesters to leave. It's a residential street. "This is private property," Brown says. The kids scuttle off.

This is Brown's tenth and final "No B.S. Barbecue," a recurring event this political season where he hosts a candidate to take questions and enjoy beers and hot dogs with the locals. Tonight's is being held in the barn of Brown's neighbor, and despite the cold, the place is hopping.

Brown and his wife Gail Huff, a veteran news broadcaster, have fortunately taken over from Bob Smith as the opening act. The couple have a familiar rapport between themselves and with the audience. When one local asks which cabinet position Brown would like in a Cruz administration, he deadpans, "How about ambassador

to Aruba?" Huff gives an exaggerated nod of approval.

But after an hour, even the Brown-Huff routine is wearing thin. Cruz's bus is on the way, Brown says, asking the restless audience to watch a campaign video. It's a slickly produced ad of sorts, showing Cruz shaking hands and speaking passionately while dramatic music plays. Still, people are finishing up their beers and looking toward the door.

At long last, the man of the hour arrives more than an hour late. Brown is quick with his introduction, and as the applause dies down, Cruz thanks his hosts. "Scott, let me say thank you in particular for getting everybody liquored up before I got here," he says. "My jokes are much funnier after three or four beers."

I'm stone-cold sober, so that's hard for me to verify. But there may be something to the theory, as Cruz launches into one of the oldest ones in the book. "You can learn a lot about a word from its history. If you look at the roots of the word politics, there are two parts: poli, meaning many, and ticks, meaning blood-sucking parasites," Cruz says, a smile spreading across his face as the crowd bursts into laughter. ♦

The Long Game

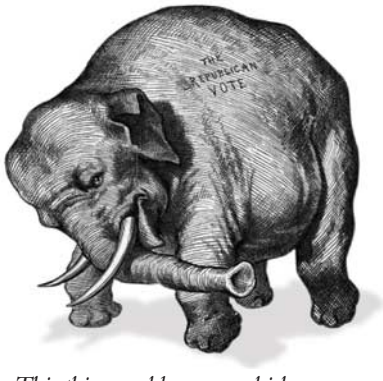
A guide to counting delegates.

BY JAY COST

The conventional wisdom about Republican presidential nominations goes something like this: Either (1) a single candidate wins Iowa and New Hampshire, then sweeps the rest of the field; or (2) the winner in Iowa fails to take New Hampshire, and we wait a few weeks for South Carolina and Nevada to figure out who the nominee will be. Either way, the whole thing wraps up early, and the later contests do not matter.

These scenarios have played out, though, when the top candidates have been generally acceptable to the majority of Republicans. Under those circumstances, letting Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Nevada sort out the candidates makes sense: The rest of the party will endorse that selection.

But the two candidates at the top of the heap right now—Donald Trump and Ted Cruz—leave a significant swath of the Republican party (if not the voters, then at least the politicians, donors, and consultants who dominate American politics) feeling quite cold. This could mean a lengthy nomination



This thing could go any which way.

battle that stretches all the way to the California primary in June.

The nomination process is the party's way of settling on a nominee reasonably acceptable to all major factions (or, at a minimum, the least unacceptable of the candidates). If a powerful bloc doesn't like any of the leading candidates, chances are they'll back an alternative. Such contests have most often been Democratic affairs (think Mondale-Hart '84 and Clinton-Obama '08), but the Republican party these days is looking as ideologically and socioeconomically disjointed as the Democrats.

If the first four or five contests are unlikely to be decisive, then how does a candidate collect—between the Iowa caucus on February 1 and the California primary on June 7—the 1,237 convention delegates needed to win the Republican nomination? It's too early to game each candidate's possible path to victory. But we do know that the rules of the nomination process will interact with the calendar to determine the winner.

This election cycle, the Republican National Committee compressed its calendar. In 2012, the primary season began in early January; this time around, it starts in February. In 2012, just 72 percent of delegates were allocated by May 8; this time around some 85 percent of all delegates will be allocated as of May 10. Still, not everything has changed: California's June primary remains the bookend of the process, as it has been for decades.

Importantly, states that hold their primaries or caucuses before March 15 must allocate their delegates proportionally (although they are allowed to mandate a minimum threshold of support). A candidate might therefore rack up a significant number of primary "wins" without building up much of a lead in delegates. That could give the trailing candidates a strong incentive to hang around (assuming they still have enough money to campaign) in the hopes of surging when the contests largely switch to winner-take-all. The opportunity for huge delegate bounties really begins on March 15: At that point, more than half of the delegates will still be unallocated, so a late-breaking candidate could increase his delegate count quickly.

Something else to keep in mind is that some states allocate portions of their delegates as winner-take-all by congressional district. This could be quite important and generate surprising results, in that it effectively gives a boost to Republican voters in heavily Democratic districts, where turnout in

Jay Cost is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard *and the author of* A Republic No More: Big Government and the Rise of American Political Corruption.

GOP primaries is correspondingly low.

The difference between caucuses and primaries is another relevant factor. Caucus states reward organization, and the most serious candidates have built strong operations in Iowa to drive turnout. But what about the other caucus states? The contenders have yet to dedicate much in the way of resources. In those states, a lot might come down to who the most politically engaged citizens support. These participants could have an outsized influence upon the final result. Delegates to the convention are allocated to states based upon population and historic support for Republican presidential candidates, not on past levels of turnout in the nomination process itself. Thus, in a race for delegates, 50,000 caucusgoers in Minnesota can have the same impact as a half-million primary voters in Wisconsin.

The timing of state contests is also important. Since 1988, Southern states have often voted in a bloc on Super Tuesday, to have more influence on the final result. They are doing that again this year—with Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia voting on Tuesday, March 1. Louisiana votes the next Saturday, Mississippi the following Tuesday. When South Carolina is factored into the mix, this means that 9 of the 11 states of the old Confederacy will have voted before the winner-take-all deadline.

Meanwhile, most of the Rust Belt will have yet to vote, and the delegate hauls there are substantial, with 69 in Illinois, 66 in Ohio, 42 in Wisconsin, 71 in Pennsylvania, and 57 in Indiana. On top of that, two of the nation's largest states will vote by some version of winner-take-all: Florida, with 99 delegates, and California, with a whopping 172. California could be decisive this year. Its primary is the last big one of the season; the state has the most delegates to offer; and its allocation formula is a mix of statewide and congressional district winner-take-all. There are a sizable number of California districts that vote overwhelmingly Democratic. It would be bizarre, to say the least, for the handful of Republicans in Maxine Waters's or Nancy Pelosi's districts to be the difference-makers—but it is a real possibility.

To appreciate just how important Byzantine nomination rules can be, it's worth recalling the 2008 Democratic nomination battle. That year, Barack Obama defeated Hillary Clinton, but the size of his popular vote victory was too small to be decisive. The rules of the nomination process made the difference. Though Obama's vote lead over Clinton was very narrow, the Democratic party's rules gave more weight to the average Obama voter than to the average Clinton voter.

Something like this could develop on the GOP side this year. Midwestern voters could be more important than Southern voters; voters in Democratic states or districts could be more valuable than voters in Republican states or districts; and participants in low-turnout caucuses could have more influence than primary voters. As the GOP goes about selecting its nominee, the rules will matter—perhaps a lot. ♦

Mexican Standoff

Begun, the Trump-Cruz-Rubio war has.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

At the January 14 debate: a war of all against all

SCOTT OLSON / GETTY

With very little warning, the Republican primaries began in earnest at the Charleston debate on January 14, closing out a year of fundraising and polite jockeying. What had once been a field of 17 declared candidates—with 8 or 10 of them being serious, substantive contenders—was, by the end of the night, whittled down to three men, each of whom has drawn a bead on the weaknesses of the others. The months of nice-guy, look-to-the-future optimism are over. It will be three-way siege warfare from here to Cleveland.

Of course, for the moment it looks like a two-way fight. Donald Trump commenced hostilities in the week leading up to the debate by questioning whether Calgary-born Ted Cruz is constitutionally eligible to be president. When challenged on these grounds during the debate, Cruz responded first by suggesting that Trump was being hypocritical and then by launching an attack on Trump for being the embodiment of "New York values."

Trump answered Cruz with a quiet, restrained paean to New York, touting

Jonathan V. Last is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

the city's resilience in the aftermath of 9/11. It might have been his strongest moment in any of the debates so far. And in the days following, conservatives in the media largely took Trump's side, castigating Cruz for what they saw as a crude attack that unfairly denigrated New Yorkers and risked alienating both the New York diaspora and city-dwelling voters generally.

But "New York values" is more clever than it seems. To this point in the race, a number of Republicans had taken shots at Trump, including Rick Perry, Carly Fiorina, John Kasich, and Jeb Bush. The substance of their critiques has been, more or less, that Donald Trump is not a "serious" candidate.

Whatever the merits of this charge, as a political matter it's been a dead letter, because it is not so much an argument against Trump as it is an insult to Trump's supporters. Those voters have real concerns—about the effects of uncontrolled immigration, about Islamic terror, about Chinese currency manipulation, about America's place in the world—and to argue that the candidate they support is simply "not serious" is to declare that their concerns aren't serious either. These voters have gotten enough of that highhandedness from Barack Obama over the last seven years. They don't need Jeb Bush talking down to them, too.

But "New York values" smartly puts the critique entirely on Trump, the man, suggesting he is not what he seems and is not in step with the culture of his own supporters. What are "New York values"? They can be anything: the city-stopping gay pride parade; a culture of easy divorce and remarriage; Goldman Sachs; nanny-state soda bans; machine politics; public corruption; rigged real estate deals; vast income inequality; welfare fraud; hubris; the 7 train; the Yankees. The beauty of "New York values" is that the term is so elastic as to be almost meaningless. Voters can supply the meaning they want.

What "New York values" does is tell the disparate parts of the Trump coalition not that they're fools for worrying about the state of America, but that Trump may be hustling them for their votes.

A telling sign that this might be an effective attack came when Trump opened up a broader front against Cruz. "Nobody likes him," he said on *This Week*. "Nobody in Congress likes him. Nobody likes him anywhere once they get to know him. He's a very—he's got an edge that's not good. You can't make deals with people like that and it's not a good thing. It's not a good thing for the country. Very nasty guy." Two days later, at a campaign stop in Iowa, Trump continued, attacking Cruz for having called Mitch McConnell a liar.

This was the first serious miscalculation Trump has made in the campaign. For starters, he has now burned bridges with conservative talk radio—both Rush Limbaugh and Mark Levin rallied to Cruz's defense and came out, more or less, as anti-Trump, after months of coyly refusing to criticize him. For another, defending Mitch McConnell in order to criticize Ted Cruz risks undermining Trump's own antiestablishment pitch. But the biggest problem was just how *weak* it made Trump look. The alpha male was complaining about someone else being too nasty for him, even admitting that he couldn't do a deal with such a person. It's enough to make you wonder: If Trump thinks he couldn't do a deal with Ted Cruz, why should voters believe Trump can conduct successful foreign policy—do "deals," in his parlance—with Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping? The whole idea of Trump as chief executive is that his unique skill set means he can do deals with *anyone*.

Trump was worried enough that on January 19 he rolled out Sarah Palin to endorse him, in theory to shore up his antiestablishment credentials and give him cover for his New York values. A week earlier, the Palin endorsement would have looked like a show of muscle. Post "New York values" it looked like a defensive maneuver. And it marks the first time Trump has been on defense since he launched his campaign. In a stroke, Ted Cruz may have wounded Trump, elevated himself, and set the stage for a two-man race.

Except that there's actually a third man. At the Charleston debate Marco Rubio marshaled two compelling, detailed prosecutions. The first was against Chris Christie, in which Rubio argued that the New Jersey governor had been on the wrong side of abortion, gun control, Common Core, and even the Supreme Court appointment of Sonia Sotomayor. In a rare misstep, Christie responded not by explaining his positions (the Common Core charge was not entirely fair) or his conversions, but by categorically denying that there was any truth to them, when to the contrary there was a great deal of truth to them.

For most politicians, lying about their weaknesses is par for the course, but for Christie—whose entire campaign is premised on his being a tough, no-nonsense, straight-talker—it's death. The Charleston debate is likely to have been the high-water mark of Christie's New Hampshire surge.

Rubio's second calculated prosecution was against Cruz. Rubio didn't have a ready-made phrase, like "New York values," but he had an idea: that Ted Cruz is not a conservative so much as an opportunist. As lines of attack go, this is potentially much more devastating than questioning Cruz's eligibility or complaining about his being nasty, because it goes to the heart of the Cruz campaign's rationale and attempts to turn its strength into a weakness. If Rubio finishes ahead of the center-right pack in New Hampshire, the supporters of Kasich, Bush, and Christie will consolidate quickly behind him. And what's more, the next phase of the campaign is built for Rubio, because he's the only candidate who's already had to face down his biggest weakness—his Gang of 8 immigration support—just to get here. Now that the gloves are off, we'll see if Cruz and Trump can take a punch, too.

So that's where we are with Iowa less than two weeks away. It's like a scene in a Western where one guy has the loot, a second guy has his pistol on him, and a third guy has *that* guy covered with his shotgun. Who'll be the last man standing? ♦

1896 and All That

Karl Rove's election primer. BY FRED BARNES

When political strategist Karl Rove spoke in Washington last week, he was reluctant to talk about the 2016 presidential race. His most extensive comment to a packed crowd at the American Enterprise Institute was to say that the Republican nominee should emphasize "economic security" for everyone, safety from attack, and national unity.

Rove stuck to his topic, William McKinley and his path to winning the presidency in 1896, about which he has written a superb book, *The Triumph of William McKinley: Why the Election of 1896 Still Matters*. That election is famous for the political realignment it created and the 36-year Republican era that followed.

But Rove achieves something new. He elevates McKinley's status to that of a historically important president. "Historians and political scientists mark other electoral realignments with the names of the presidents who brought them about—Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, and FDR—yet have overlooked the man who brought about a new party system in 1896," Rove writes. He corrects this error.

He also clarifies, once and for all, who was in charge of the McKinley campaign. It was McKinley, not Mark Hanna. Most of Hanna's advice was bad, though he was a great fundraiser. McKinley's wisest campaign adviser was a young lawyer from Nebraska named Charles Dawes, later President Coolidge's vice president and a 1925 Nobel Prize winner.

In his book, Rove doesn't offer specific advice for Republicans today. But the political adviser to President George W. Bush does say this: "McKinley's campaign matters more than a century later because it provides lessons either party could use today to end an era of a 50-50 nation and gain an edge for a durable period."

The lessons are found in the closing chapter, in which Rove spells out "eight reasons for McKinley's victory." My guess is Republicans are more likely than Democrats to pay attention to these lessons, as well they should.

'Barking Dogs Never Bite' (1900)

"The first is that [McKinley] conducted a campaign based on big issues." McKinley and William Jennings Bryan, the Democratic nominee, were principled men who focused on "consequential issues in ways that drew sharp distinctions." The GOP nominee in 2016 shouldn't have trouble doing this, since the party wants the next president to reverse nearly everything President Obama has done.

The second reason is McKinley attacked Bryan's "supposed strength," his advocacy of a currency inflated by unlimited coinage of silver. This gave Democrats "an enormous advantage" and made Bryan the "candidate of change," Rove writes. That is, until McKinley "realized the old political truth that what a candidate thinks is his strong point is often an Achilles heel. Attack it, and his campaign is crippled."

The strength of Democrats now is the notion they "care" about people and Republicans don't. Republicans need to show that the vast amounts of government spending Democrats favor do more harm than good. This is a tough case to make, but easier given the stagnant economy.

Reason three for his victory is that McKinley "was a different kind of Republican who recognized his party must broaden and modernize its appeal or it would lose," Rove writes. This should be obvious, since George W. Bush won with this strategy in 2000. Rove also notes the McKinley managers "did not delude themselves that there were millions of stay-at-home Republicans" who would suddenly decide to vote.

Number four: McKinley "broadened the electoral battlefield." But he did this only after overcoming the "natural inclination for a campaign to focus first on defense," protecting the party's safe states. Once McKinley switched to offense, he "flipped ten states Democrats had won in 1892 and two states Populists carried then," Rove writes. To match McKinley, this year's Republican nominee will have to win states that normally vote Democratic in presidential contests but now have GOP governors or legislatures. New Jersey, Maine, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, even Illinois, come to mind.

The fifth reason is McKinley "ran for the nomination as an outsider, undercutting the traditional role played by party bosses." Powerful party bosses no longer exist. But McKinley further took steps in the primary, with "consequences for both the general election and the country's entire political system in the years that followed." He rejected "anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant appeals [and] reached out to black voters and championed their rights." The lesson here is pretty straightforward.

The sixth reason for McKinley's victory: He was seen as "a candidate of change." Protectionism and opposition to free silver "allowed him to portray himself as the leader who

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Fred Barnes is an executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

would change the country's direction and heal the economy," Rove writes. A Republican candidate in 2016 who cannot credibly run as a leader for change will surely lose.

Reason seven is McKinley "ran as a unifier, adopting the language of national reconciliation." Hillary Clinton tried this in the January 17 Democratic debate, citing three issues on which she is a rigid partisan. She failed. Obama succeeded in his 2008 campaign by promising to end bitter partisan divisions in Washington. He didn't keep the promise. McKinley knew Americans "thirsted for someone who could replace discord and rancor with optimism and unity." That thirst remains strong in 2016.

Finally, we get to number eight, "the most important reason for McKinley's victory." It is the "quality" of his campaign. It was "a critical difference," Rove writes, "and the size and scope of past efforts to win the White House paled in comparison to that of McKinley's men." His insistence on campaigning from his front porch was a brilliant stroke. His words "filled the nation's papers each day, reaching voters hundreds of miles from [his] front stoop," Rove writes. That he drew "vast numbers . . . demonstrated the deep backing the Republican enjoyed."

The McKinley campaign isn't a blueprint for a Republican campaign in 2016. But it comes pretty close. Presidential candidates who read Rove's account of how McKinley won will be wiser for taking the trouble. ♦

Propitiating Iran

A recipe for bad deals.

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT & RAY TAKEYH

American presidents are always emotionally and politically drawn to the plight of American hostages overseas. In his sympathy and paternalism, Barack Obama seems just like Ronald Reagan, who traded Hawk missiles to Iran for the release of Americans held by the Lebanese Hezbollah, the clerical regime's most successful and obedient kidnapping offspring. Through President Obama's diplomacy, five Americans who were languishing in Iran's prisons can come home. The deal's shortcomings, however, ought to be obvious, as those innocent Americans were traded for seven Iranians and Iranian Americans who were convicted of transferring illicit technology—in some cases dual-use nuclear technology—to Tehran. (The administration also agreed to take 14 others off Interpol's arrest list.) This latest deal reflects a larger problem with the president's diplomacy toward adversarial regimes. Through much of his tenure, Obama has practiced what can be called "We just can't get that."

This approach has been most debilitating in the case of the Islamic Republic. The administration's heralded nuclear agreement with Iran, after all, lifts sanctions while conceding a vast enrichment capacity that will only grow over time. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action has the distinction of being the most deficient arms control accord in U.S. history, for unlike all of its predecessors it promises an end to restrictions within 15 years. Historically, the objective of arms control agreements has been to impose meaningful and permanent limits on the other side's nuclear aspirations. When the administration's critics called for more stringent terms, the president and his supporters shrugged their shoulders and asserted, "We just can't get that," preemptively conceding Iranian demands for fear that the mullahs would walk.

The hostages-for-criminals swap is the latest example of this all-too-familiar pattern. The White House had previously asked for the immediate (meaning unconditional) release of all American prisoners. It was Iran's president Hassan Rouhani who first dangled the possibility of exchanging the Americans for Iranians and Iranian Americans held in the United States. It's helpful to remember that Rouhani was the clerical regime's point man in the missiles-for-hostages Iran-contra affair and, according to the memoirs of former president Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, always eager to demand more for the release of American hostages.

The Islamic Republic has patiently observed its red lines during Rouhani's presidency. It refused to concede that its holding of Americans was an egregious violation of international law and (prerevolutionary) Persian custom. Sure enough, the administration once more complied. Instead of holding fast to its demand that all hostages be freed and stressing that sanctions relief would not come until then, President Obama issued clemency for the Iranians and Iranian Americans who'd violated U.S. law. The response to critics asking for better terms: "We just can't get that."

The permissive and passive Obama doctrine has found application elsewhere, most notably Cuba. The United States normalized relations with the country without demanding any fundamental changes in the Castro dictatorship's treatment of its citizens. In unveiling its diplomatic triumph, the administration denigrated the longstanding U.S. policy of revisiting ties with Cuba only after the Castro government initiated important reforms. The United States imposed sanctions on Cuba for decades not out of spite, but because Cuba repressed its people, acted as a surrogate of Soviet power during the Cold War, and did

Reuel Marc Gerecht, a contributing editor, is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. Ray Takeyh is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and the coauthor of the forthcoming The Pragmatic Superpower: Winning the Cold War in the Middle East.

much to destabilize Latin America.

The Obama administration made no demands of Cuba for the simple and straightfoward reason that the regime likely would have rejected those demands and thus ended Obama's hope for a new diplomatic era.

Much of the commentariat is celebrating the exchange and the nuclear deal as an indication that the so-called Iranian pragmatists were besting their hardline detractors. All governments suffer from factionalism, including that of the United States. The Islamic Republic is the only regime that has turned its factional politics into an excuse for international misbehavior. Every time the clerical regime engages in unacceptable practices—for example, publicly humiliating U.S. sailors it captured at sea—a cascade of U.S. commentators, not to mention White House officials, blame the hardliners seeking to undermine President Rouhani. Forceful American actions are always discouraged because "moderates" in Tehran would suffer; American "restraint," on the other hand, strengthens the moderates' internal position—presumably because the "hardliners" will not be offended by American aggression and thus be more disposed to the wisdom of "moderates."

A full account of the "moderates-vs.-hardliners" narrative has never really been put forward by the Obama administration, or for that matter by the president's supporters in the media and academe, a few of whom actually know Persian and might be able to present a historical case to argue, say, that Hassan Rouhani is a moderate who no longer views the United States as the primary and defining enemy of the Islamic Republic. Why American foreign policy should be pegged to the success of the weakest players in the Iranian regime, and not to the guys with the guns, remains unasked and unexplained. It is an underappreciated irony of Obama's presidency that the Iranian "moderates" of his tenure are the same—the very same—"moderates" of Reagan's Iran-contra sojourn.

The Obama administration and congressional supporters of the hostage exchange and nuclear deal ought to look at the recent massive disqualification by Iran's Guardian Council of "moderate" parliamentary candidates for the upcoming elections. They might consider the possibility that their policy of engagement has produced within Iran the opposite of their intentions. The more Obama and other Western leaders express their hopes that the nuclear deal can be the beginning of better rapport between the Islamic Republic and the West, the more Khamenei and his Revolutionary Guards recoil from outreach and crack down on those in Iran who want closer Western ties—or just want more Western commerce and investment to build up Iranian Islamist power (the Rouhani camp).

Above, American hostages in Tehran, 1979; below, U.S. sailors taken captive by Iran, January 12, 2016

It is really past time for the clerical regime to be treated like any other government: When it violates international conventions, it should be held responsible as a nation-state. Iran is a country, and the clerical regime has one undisputed leader. The Islamic Republic is not a collection of factions and warring militias in the manner of a banana republic. American foreign policy would be more cogent and effective if Washington let Tehran know that Americans aren't going to fall for the "good-cop-bad-cop" routine anymore. That doesn't mean there aren't real differences among members of the ruling revolutionary elite, let alone between the ruling elite and the educated middle class; the United States, as a government, just shouldn't try to turn sociology and psychiatry into foreign policy. But that might curtail the conversations between Secretary of State John Kerry and foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who has a first-rate sense about when to deploy "moderate-vs.-hardliner" munitions against Westerners.

At its core, the Obama presidency is about propitiating the United States' enemies who, in the mind of the president and those around him, have been historically transgressed by the American imperium. In the Obama cosmology, Iranian clerics, Cuban Communists, and Chinese chauvinists are all victims of centuries of American and Western abuse and exploitation. No agreement with them should demand reciprocity, since they are the disadvantaged and America is the superpower. Diplomacy in this view cannot be separated from the expiation of past wrongs. It is a variation of social work. The Obama doctrine—"We just can't get that"—is an inevitable outgrowth of such guilt.

The failures of the second Iraq war have convulsed the Republican party and given isolationism more running room. They have proven at least as disruptive and transformational on the left. President Obama's foreign *raison d'être* appears to be the new standard within the Democratic party. For those overseas who look to America to put some muscle behind its virtues, for those who admired well-armed liberal internationalists and know how essential they have been to bipartisan American foreign policy since World War II, such an evolution is depressing. For Khamenei, the Revolutionary Guards, and the big-power, big-economy imperialists behind Rouhani, however, it's good news all the way around. ♦

Retire This Idea

The states shouldn't run their own savings plans. BY IKE BRANNON

Do we really need new vehicles for retirement savings, especially ones that give new powers to state governments to coerce workers to save? Several states—most notably Illinois—are creating their own state-sponsored savings plans. The idea is to make retirement saving "easy" for workers (perhaps even by making it mandatory). The Obama administration is supporting the effort, with the Department of Labor recently altering regulations to make it easier for states to create their own retirement savings programs.

Of course, the federal government already makes saving for retirement mandatory: Hefty payroll taxes fund Social Security. The government also provides generous tax breaks to encourage retirement savings. (If it weren't for the breaks, the Treasury might collect an extra $100 billion in taxes each year.) Nearly all companies with 50 employees or more offer retirement benefits of some sort. Governments and a few businesses still offer defined-benefit pension plans, but these days most companies provide employees tax-preferred 401(k) accounts. New federal regulations encourage firms with 401(k) plans to enroll new employees into company retirement programs automatically to boost participation.

The self-employed can set up their own tax-preferred IRA savings accounts, whether with banks or fund providers such as Fidelity or TIAA-CREF. Anyone with a bank account and a computer can set up an IRA and arrange for regular contributions. For low-income workers without a company retirement plan, the Treasury Department recently created the MyRA program providing no-fee, starter retirement accounts.

No doubt, the current system has its problems: An employer-based system can lead, as one changes jobs, to a jumble of different accounts. Unless one is vigilant about consolidating them, multiple retirement accounts can be difficult to keep track of and costly for fund providers to administer. But is adding state-run savings accounts to the mix more likely to solve this problem or just make it worse? For instance, in the last 20 years I've worked in five different states. Does anyone believe that the states would make it easy for people like me to consolidate various state retirement moneys into one state's account? They certainly don't do so for college savings accounts.

The record for such state-based savings funds isn't particularly encouraging. The states, of course, administer their own college savings accounts, and to say that these are investor-friendly would be a stretch. Most states and the District of Columbia offer various funds in their college investment programs; the costs for those government-provided funds can be compared with the same funds offered on the private market. Take the S&P 500 Index Fund run by State Street Global Advisors: On the private market, the fund's management fee (known as the "expense ratio") is 0.157 percent. Over at the D.C. College Savings Plan, by contrast, the expense ratio is a hefty 0.46 percent—triple the cost of fees outside the college fund. The costs are higher in part because the District imposes a 0.15 percent fee for "expenses," a fee shared with the investment company managing the program (in the case of D.C., this is Calvert Investment Management).

Such plan "expenses" have in some places been rather loosely defined: In Illinois the state treasurer famously used such funds to purchase an SUV.

For people investing in the D.C. college fund who don't actually reside in the District (the technical term for them is "suckers"), the city also imposes a sales charge of nearly 5 percent, which makes it an incredibly foolish investment. Why Elizabeth Warren isn't up in arms over this is beyond me. Or rather, it would be beyond me if it weren't perfectly clear why—the champions of big government don't seem to be so worried about investors getting fleeced when it is big government doing the fleecing.

And then there's the risk of corruption: When states are in the savings-fund business, whether for college or retirement, there are tremendous pressures to put in the fix. In January, the Securities and Exchange Commission alleged that a State Street Corp. executive, "through bribes and campaign donations" in 2010 and 2011, paid off Ohio's deputy treasurer to win state pension contracts. The SEC announced that State Street has agreed to a $12 million penalty "to settle charges that it conducted a pay-to-play scheme."

If the federal government wants to do more to encourage retirement planning, it can try to entice more savings via tax breaks, nudge people to save with other incentives, or even shove them into saving more in their current retirement accounts with some sort of mandate. Bad as some of these might sound, an entirely new system of state-based savings accounts would be even worse. ♦

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Ike Brannon is a fellow at the Cato Institute and president of Capital Policy Analytics, a consulting firm in Washington, D.C.

A Dangerous Combination

In Algeria, a restive population and a failing strongman. **BY BENJAMIN WEINTHAL & JOHN SCHINDLER**

Wreckage from the al Qaeda attack on the Splendid Hotel in Burkina Faso, January 18

Two weeks ago, al Qaeda-linked jihadists attacked the Splendid Hotel in Burkina Faso and murdered 28 people, including an American missionary. It was the work of al Qaeda's Algerian franchise, one of the world's deadliest jihadist groups, albeit one less known to Westerners. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is led by the one-eyed Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a charismatic terrorist who has evaded death and capture numerous times and in the process transformed AQIM into a major threat across West Africa. It's time we paid more attention to Belmokhtar and his jihadist gang—as well as to the troubled country that produced them.

In sharp contrast to the once-trendy leftist myth of Algeria as a kind of secular Arab socialist paradise, the Algeria of 2016 is a backwards country drowning in stagnation and repression. A large proportion of its young men and women wish to flee to France to secure economic opportunities and escape the secret police.

Economic malaise puts the military regime—which has run the country since the French departed in 1962—at risk. A staggering 60 percent of state revenue comes from the energy sector, and over the course of 2015, collapsing oil prices banged up the economy. Still, the regime has a large cushion that enables it to cope. With a robust $200 billion in foreign reserves, the junta retains the option of pumping money to the populace to reduce social unrest. Put simply, the Saudi remedy of using cash to placate restless masses is available, at least for the near and medium term. The long term is something else.

Ordinary Algerians do not know if their ailing 78-year-old president Abdelaziz Bouteflika is lucid. He communicates via opaque letters, while his public appearances have dwindled. The man who once promised to save the country from the abyss has grown senile and ineffectual. The severely ill Bouteflika has ruled since 1999 (he is the country's longest-serving president) and has been incapacitated since 2013, when he suffered his second stroke. His fourth-term victory in 2014 was widely viewed as the product of a fundamentally corrupt electoral process.

Together with the struggling Algerian economy, the fight to succeed Bouteflika may very well produce a series of increasingly public convulsions within Algeria's formidable security and intelligence establishments, who are the country's real rulers.

Since independence, the shadowy and feared military intelligence service, the Department of Intelligence and Security, or DRS, has been the backbone of the corrupt system—what the Algerians call *le pouvoir* (the power) that runs the country. But the hold of the DRS may be slipping. In September, the hidden hand of the Algerian state ousted the head of the intelligence service, General Mohamed Mediène, popularly known as Toufik. Mediène had run the DRS since 1990 and was the world's longest serving intelligence boss, but nobody had seen him in public in years, and few pictures of him existed. A widened purge of generals and senior officers largely coincided with Mediène's removal, including the arrest in August of the head of counterterrorism, General Abdelkader Ait-Ouarabi.

Mediène and the regime waged a ruthless war against Islamist militants in the 1990s, a war that cost nearly 200,000 lives, most of them civilians, without solving Algeria's deeply rooted Islamist problem. And this brings us back to Mokhtar Belmokhtar, involved both in Algeria's bloody civil war of

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Benjamin Weinthal is a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. John Schindler is a former Pentagon intelligence official.

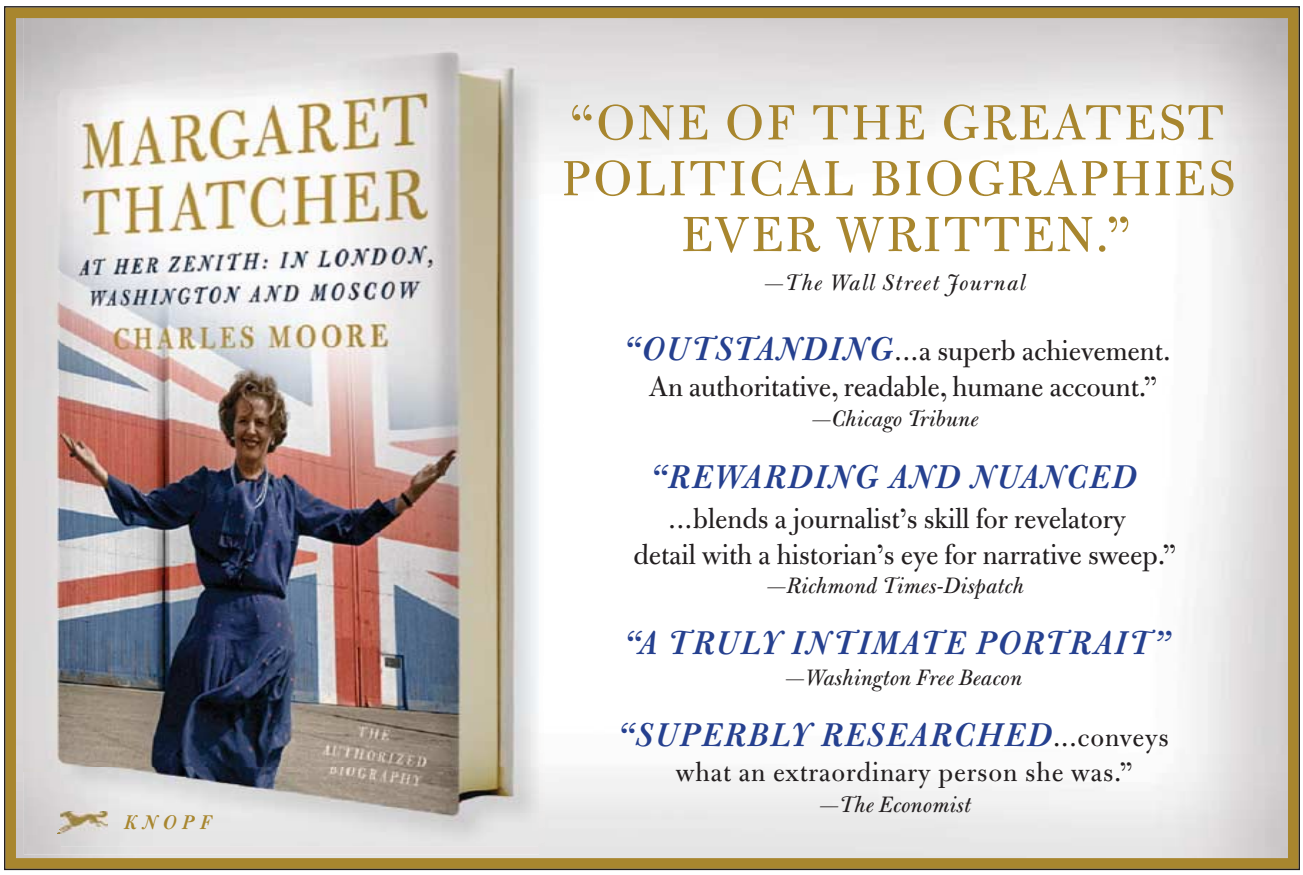
the 1990s and its precarious present. The man who lost his left eye while mishandling explosives was so enamored of Osama bin Laden that he named a son after the al Qaeda leader. He allegedly masterminded the 2013 attack on the Tigantourine gas plant in Amenas, eastern Algeria, which resulted in the deaths of 40 oil employees, including three Americans, and became a bona fide star of the global jihad movement. The revolutionary jihadist zeal and discipline that Belmokhtar embodies is a point of attraction for many young and disaffected Algerians.

Mokhtar Belmokhtar

The religious nationalism of the 1991-2002 Algerian civil war mirrored, in striking ways, the conflict that has left Syria in tatters: Both upheavals were animated by the exercise of democratic tendencies—the ballot in Algeria and, initially, peaceful protests in Syria. Both the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria and Bashar al-Assad's Baath party in Syria insulated themselves from reform. Determined security services showed no hesitation in crushing Islamist movements. In the case of Algeria, during the 1990s, the FLN forced the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) into organizational and political oblivion, and then fought a bloody war against the armed groups that succeeded the FIS. Assad's father, Hafez, just as ruthlessly killed perhaps as many as 40,000 Sunni Islamists in the 1982 Hama massacre. Today, Syria has largely ceased to exist as a cohesive state. Algeria, however, has thus far dodged "Arab Spring" revolts unfolding in its neighborhood. But for how much longer?

While the brutality of Algeria's civil war has discouraged new revolts among members of the older generation, memories of that dreadful conflict are not front-and-center in the minds of the mushrooming youth population. Algerian Islamists, numbering in the thousands, present problems for both Bouteflika and Europe, a continent already overwhelmed by the number of European passport-holders of North African background returning from fighting in the Iraqi and Syrian theaters.

Veteran jihadists returning to Algeria from Afghanistan around 1990 formed a key part of that Islamist revolt against the regime, and those returning from Syria and Iraq may come to play a similar role. The interplay between Algeria and France's large Algerian population, with its own reservoirs of radicals, could set the stage for more jihadist attacks on European soil. After all, French Algerians are responsible for several recent attacks in Europe, including the 2014 attack at the Jewish Museum in Brussels and the January 2015 attacks on *Charlie Hebdo* and HyperCacher. ♦



Nine Tales of Trump at His Trumpiest

And these just scratch the surface

By Matt Labash

It's that magical time in the presidential cycle again, when all the preelection year's wild conjecture, clueless handicapping, and abject foolishness has ended, so that the election year's wild conjecture, clueless handicapping, and abject foolishness can begin. It's that time when panicked, demoralized citizens, who believe that our country is dying, compose themselves, do their civic duty, and choose the man or woman best suited to finish it off.

To all but the most obstinate poll-science deniers, that man could very easily be Donald J. Trump. In an impossibly large field, Trump has dominated for seven months. He hasn't, in fact, placed second in a national GOP primary poll since early November, when Ben Carson briefly nipped Trump by one point. And in all but one national poll since mid-November, Trump has enjoyed double-digit leads—up to 27 points—over his next-closest competitor.

Trump at *Playboy*'s 50th anniversary celebration in New York City, December 2003

THE WARGO / GETTY IMAGES

When it comes to Trump, there's a lot of love going around. Arenas-full of swooning fans love Trump because he's saved them from politically correct tedium, while appearing to be as angry as they are. The press loves him because he's spared them from having to write about Jeb Bush, the low-energy former favorite who still seems to be screwing up his nerve to ask for his lunch money back. And Trump loves himself because, well, he's never come up shy in that department. ("Part of the beauty of me is that I'm very rich.") Originally assigned the role of court jester, Trump is now so fully committed to his own joke that he's nearly ceased to be regarded as one.

As reporters breathlessly cover his every speech, tweet, and fart (often indistinguishable), Trump has correctly calculated that if he's outrageous all-day-every-day, his abnormality becomes the new normal. It is no longer resented but expected. The man who was once accused by *Vanity Fair* of reading Hitler speeches in bed for propagandistic inspiration truly could title his own memoir—aside from the five or ten he's already written—*Triumph of the Will*.

If you're the sort of person who's been conditioned to accept reality-show excess as entertainment, which is to say the sort of person who lives in America, then what's not to love? There's the supermodel wife and the gold-covered "Trump"-embossed Boeing 757. There's the garishly decorated three-story Trump Tower penthouse that had a *New Statesman* writer, after a tour, calling Trump "a man whose front room proved that it really was possible to spend a million dollars in Woolworth's." There's that hair that looks like a mac-'n'-cheese-colored nutria that was hit by an oil truck. There's the permanent pucker, which at rest makes Trump look like a puzzled duck working out long-division problems in its head.

And who doesn't admire his fiscal conservatism? ("The only kind of people I want counting my money are little short guys that wear yarmulkes.") His impeccable manners? (To Larry King: "Do you mind if I sit back a little? Because your breath is very bad.") His commitment to diversity? ("I have a great relationship with the blacks.") Who couldn't appreciate the executive know-how and tested mettle that come from telling La Toya Jackson "you're fired" on *Celebrity Apprentice*?

And as if all that doesn't qualify Trump to Make America Great Again®, he's a man who knows his own mind,

Matt Labash is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

except when he changes it. (Trump has switched his party registration five times since 1987, once every 5.8 years.) He's a man who tells it like it is, except when he's lying. ("Sorry losers and haters, but my IQ is one of the highest and you all know it!") He's a man of rich contradictions. ("I'm actually very modest," he once bragged.)

But to lovingly catalog all of Trump's gaffes is a pointless exercise. Even calling them "gaffes" is a bit of a misnomer. Gaffes are what stop normal politicians. But a gaffe can't actually be considered a gaffe if, say, you give a speech in the belly of the evangelical beast, Liberty University, and show your total ignorance of the Bible (an amazing holy book, right up there with *The Art of the Deal*) by calling Second Corinthians "Two Corinthians," and yet you still sop up 42 percent of evangelical voters, as Trump did in a recent *New York Times*/CBS poll. Second-place Ted Cruz (or should I say "two place") only managed 25 percent. Expecting a gaffe to stop Trump, at this late date, is like expecting a traffic cone to stop a runaway train.

It could all still go haywire for Trump, of course. Cruz, a man with a delivery so oleaginous that he sounds less like he should be running for president than hawking repossessed Chevy Vegas with odometer rollback, is neck-and-neck with Trump in Iowa. Not that winning Iowa necessarily matters: In only two of the last six GOP contests where a sitting president wasn't running unopposed did Iowa's winner go on to become the nominee.

But with a sizable chunk of the electorate now poised to take the great leap forward with Trump, it may be worth hitting the pause button for some quiet reflection. Who is this man and what do we really know of him?

After combing my vast Trump archive, as well as contacting Trump sources, I present herewith nine of Trump's Trumpiest moments—a Trump Moments collage, if you will—that distill the very essence of the man. Not unlike Trump's tremendous cologne, Success, an inspiring blend of fresh juniper and iced red currant, with rich bottom notes of vetiver, tonka bean, birchwood, and musk. (In a word, "classy.")

One cannot hope to capture Trump's entirety, since he contains multitudes. For instance, sometimes Trump will say he's "really rich," while at others, he'll say he's "very, very rich." That's Trump for you. Just when you think he'll zig, he zags. But as with the Republican primary, sometimes choices just need to be made, no matter how imperfect.

Sportswriter Rick Reilly gave Trump an 11 on a 10-point cheating scale: Trump fabricated scores on his scorecard, called gimmes on chip shots, and conceded putts to himself by raking his ball into the hole rather than actually putting. 'He rakes like my gardener!' Reilly said.

IAN MACNICOL / GETTY IMAGES

I. GOLF CHEAT

Americans are a forgiving people. They'll forgive a guy who cheats in business or on his wife. (Trump's been accused of both.) But will they forgive a man who cheats at golf? According to the *Washington Post*'s Ben Terris, Trump is in trouble if they don't.

Despite Trump's allegedly having a 4 handicap and owning scores of golf courses ("the best in the world"), he plays about as straight as a corkscrew. When Alice Cooper was asked who is the worst celebrity golf cheat he's ever played with, he responded, "I played with Donald Trump one time. That's all I'm going to say."

Sportswriter Rick Reilly, who played golf with Trump for his book *Who's Your Caddy?*, gave Trump an 11 on a 10-point cheating scale, telling the *Post* that Trump fabricated scores on his scorecard, called gimmes on chip shots, and conceded putts to himself by raking his ball into the hole rather than actually putting. "He rakes like my gardener!" Reilly said.

When Mark Mulvoy, then-managing editor of *Sports Illustrated*, played golf with Trump in the mid-'90s, the two were forced to take cover when a storm rolled in. After the rain subsided, Mulvoy returned to the green to see a ball that he didn't remember 10 feet away from the pin. When he asked whose ball it was, Trump replied, "That's me."

"Give me a f—ing break," Mulvoy told Trump. "You've been hacking away in the . . . weeds all day. You do not lie there." According to Mulvoy's recollection to the *Post*, Trump responded: "Ahh, the guys I play with cheat all the time. I have to cheat just to keep up with them."

Trump, for his part, denied knowing who Mulvoy is, claimed never to have played with Alice Cooper, and of Reilly, he said, "I always thought he was a terrible writer. I absolutely killed him, and he wrote very inaccurately."

Maybe. Or maybe cheating jibes with Trump's worldview. As Trump told Timothy O'Brien in *TrumpNation: The Art of Being the Donald*: "If you don't win, you can't get away with it. And I win, I win. I always win. In the end, I always win, whether it's in golf, whether it's in tennis, whether it's in life."

II. NEEDY OR GREEDY?

Back in the olden days of the 1980s and early '90s, before every snarky 22-year-old with a Twitter account and a dream became a satirist, ridiculing public figures was mainly left to the professionals. And nobody did it better than *Spy* magazine, which treated Donald Trump like a piñata with a comb-over.

In an exhaustive survey of the late *Spy*'s archive, Bloomberg's Andre Tartar found that *Spy* mentioned Trump an average of 8.7 times per issue in its first 50 issues. What they called him wasn't pretty: a well-fed condo hustler, an ugly cuff-link buff, a close-friend-free millionaire, a *Forbes* 400 dropout. The most frequent and hurtful insult of all was "short-fingered vulgarian."

Trump, for his part, took the bait at least once, declaring to the *New York Post*'s Page Six, "My fingers are long and beautiful, as, has been well-documented, are various other parts of my body." But the sobriquet stung the thin-skinned Trump badly enough that Graydon Carter, *Spy*'s cofounder and the current editor of *Vanity Fair*, writes that to this day, he occasionally receives an envelope from Trump, "generally a tear sheet from a magazine. On all of them, he has circled his hand in gold Sharpie in a valiant effort to highlight the length of his fingers. I almost feel sorry for the poor fellow because, to me, the fingers still look abnormally stubby." (On Twitter, Trump has called Carter "sloppy," "a disaster," and a "major loser—just ask his wife!")

But *Spy*'s best caper came when they conducted their "Who Is America's Cheapest Zillionaire?" sting operation. After setting up a phony company called the National Refund Clearinghouse, they began mailing checks in installments to 58 well-known people, everyone from Richard Gere to Woody Allen to Rupert Murdoch to Donald Trump. The checks were for laughable amounts: $1.11, $2, and a measly 64 cents. Of the entire list, only two people cashed all three checks: Donald Trump and Adnan Khashoggi, the arms dealer/Imelda Marcos codefendant. (Khashoggi would also sell his prized yacht *Nabila* to the Sultan of Brunei, who in turn sold it to Trump, who in Trumpian fashion, renamed it the *Trump Princess*.)

Perhaps Trump isn't a cheapskate. The *Hollywood Reporter*, after all, did allege that he hired actors to enthusiastically fill out the crowd at his presidential announcement for 50 bucks a pop. But it does become a little clearer how the Smoking Gun website found Trump to be "the .00013 Man"—as in, that's what percentage of his income the billionaire had donated to charity. As the *New York Post*'s Phil Mushnick once quoted a Trump business associate: Trump is "the kind of guy who writes a small check to a charity, then spends $10,000 publicizing that he gives to charity."

III. TRUMP WILL SUE YOU

Or at least he will threaten to. It's not entirely clear whether Trump is a bully, or just a baby. But for a candidate who spends so much time knocking government, Trump sure does make its courthouses his home away from (one of his six or so) homes. As *Crain's New York Business* has reported, Trump has been a plaintiff or defendant in lawsuits filed in New York state courts 65 times and in federal lawsuits 172 times—and that's just for starters.

A (very) incomplete list of people or entities Trump or Trump minions have either sued or threatened to sue includes: NBC, ABC, the BBC, the *Daily Beast*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal* for suggesting he had cash-flow problems, his biographer, a rapper who name-checked him, the Palm Beach airport for making too much noise, the Club for Growth, Jeb Bush's super-PAC, John Kasich's super-PAC, Rosie O'Donnell (she called him a "snake-oil salesman," he called her "a fat pig"), Bill Maher (for not ponying up on a $5 million "bet" that Trump could not prove he's not the "spawn of his mother having sex with an orangutan"), a Twitter user who duped him into retweeting a tribute to serial killers, a Scottish offshore wind farm that would infringe on the view at one of his golf courses, his first wife for publishing a novel that resembled their marriage, his second wife's bodyguard, a financial analyst for predicting his casino would fail (it basically did), and the *Onion* for publishing a satirical piece, under Trump's fake byline, titled "When You're Feeling Low, Just Remember I'll Be Dead in About 15 or 20 Years."

My personal favorite, however, has to be the time Trump went after Julius and Eddie Trump (no relation to Donald) for having the misfortune of sharing his last name. As *Crain's* tells it, back in 1984, the non-megalomaniacal-billionaire Trumps had bid on a drugstore chain, their company name being the Trump Group. But a letter was mistakenly sent to the (Donald) Trump Organization from the publisher of *Drug Store News*, welcoming the wrong Trump to the industry.

The next day, Trump's pitbull lawyer, the late and legendary Roy Cohn, demanded that the other Trump Group change its name by the following day or there would be blood. Trump filed suit, alleging of the other Trumps, who were born in South Africa, that they were, as *Crain's* put it, "nothing but a pair of late-arriving immigrants trying to piggyback on his good name."

The "impostor" Trumps pointed out that they were formidable Trumps, too. They'd been profiled by *Forbes* in 1976, well before most people had any idea who Donald Trump was. Before they registered "the Trump Group" in 1982, the only companies that turned up in their search were those connected with mollusk pesticides, nut candy, and toilet paper.

After the case lingered for five years, a state judge smacked down The Donald, essentially telling him his name wasn't the special snowflake he thought it was. If Donald Trump had only demanded to see the birth certificates—which he's since become adept at doing—he'd have realized that the other Trumps had been using their last name longer than he has.

IV. DONALD TRUMP, FAILURE

For someone who constantly toots his own success horn ("I'm the most successful person to ever run for the presidency, by far"), Donald Trump sure does fail a lot. Never mind his two failed marriages, the four corporate bankruptcies, and his failure to find a suitable hairstyle over the course of his adult life. *Time* magazine and others have run entire lists of his failures.

There was Trump Airlines, Trump Mortgage ("Who knows more about financing than me?"), Trump the board game, Trump casinos, and three stabs at Trump magazines (may they all rest in peace). Though The Donald doesn't drink, there was also Trump Vodka ("success distilled"), with Trump once predicting the "T&T" (a Trump and Tonic) would become the most "called-for cocktail in America," before the company ceased production due to lack of interest. There was also Trump Steaks (the "world's greatest"), which used to be featured in the Sharper Image catalogue, where most people go for their meat-buying needs. As *Time* suggests: "The company has since been discontinued—maybe it had something to do with the Trump Steakhouse in Las Vegas being closed down in 2012 for 51 health code violations, including serving five-month old duck."

But most egregious was Trump University, a purported real estate school that attracted the attention of New York's attorney general, who brought a $40 million suit on behalf of 5,000 people. The *New York Times* described Trump U as "a bait-and-switch scheme," with students lured "by free sessions, then offered packages ranging from $10,000 to $35,000 for sham courses that were supposed to teach them how to become successful real estate investors." Though Trump himself was largely absentee, one advertisement featured him proclaiming, "Just copy exactly what I've done and get rich."

FATHEAD.COM

While some students were hoping to glean wisdom directly from the success oracle, there was no such luck. At one seminar, attendees were told they'd get to have their picture taken with Trump. Instead, they ended up getting snapped with his cardboard cutout.

What must have been a crushing disappointment to aspiring real estate barons is a boon to Republican-primary metaphor hunters.

V. HE LOVES THE LITTLE GUY, UNLESS THE LITTLE GUY NEEDS TO BE CRUSHED

Or in one case, not even a little guy, but a little old lady. Among civil-libertarian Trumpologists, Vera Coking has become something of a folk hero. As outlined by the *Washington Post*'s Manuel Roig-Franzia and the Institute for Justice (whose lawyers represented Coking), in the 1990s, Coking was a then-septuagenarian widow and proud owner of a three-story boarding house in Atlantic City, where she'd lived since 1961.

As casino developers circled, her house became vulture bait. In the '80s, *Penthouse*'s Bob Guccione offered her $1 million to sell so he could throw up a casino on her land. Coking passed. So Guccione began building around her, going so far as to construct skeletal beams over her roof. But in the middle of construction, his project went bust.

Trump swooped in, having bought Guccione's remains, seeking to enlarge his casino empire with the Trump Plaza (now closed). He too made a play for her land, desiring to turn it into a waiting area for limousines. While attempting to get her to sell, Trump buttered her up with Neil Diamond tickets, though Coking had no idea who Neil Diamond was. She still stubbornly refused.

So Trump went to work around her, dismantling Guccione's unfinished construction. And while Trump has aggressively disparaged the condition of her house, as though that justifies trying to take it, Coking's lawyers charged that demolition crews had started a fire on her roof, broken windows, removed her fire escape, and "nearly destroyed the entire third story of her home by dropping concrete blocks through the roof." Coking still refused to sell.

Enter the city's Casino Reinvestment Development Authority, a highfalutin' name for an eminent domain operation, working in cahoots with Trump to remove Coking's house from her possession. In 1994, the casino authority made her an offer she couldn't refuse: They would give her $251,250 for her house (750 grand less than what Guccione had offered a decade prior). And if she didn't accept within 30 days, they'd take her to court to snatch her land through eminent domain.

Coking and the city ended up duking it out in court, Trump throwing in with the casino authority. But after years of wrangling, in 1998, the Superior Court of New Jersey ruled in Coking's favor, shutting Trump and Co. down. Trump, who has repeatedly expressed rapturous support for eminent domain, claiming it's necessary to build roads and schools (if not limousine parking lots at casinos), called Coking's house "a tremendous blight on Atlantic City."

The brassy widow, for her part, called Trump "a maggot, a cockroach, and a crumb."

VI. TWIDIOT OR TWILIGHT LOVER?

As of this writing, Donald Trump has 5.75 million Twitter followers, and has tweeted over 30,000 times, excluding the occasional deleted tweet, such as: "I would like to extend my best wishes to all, even the haters and losers, on this special date, September 11th."

Trump is very proud of his Twitter prowess. Which isn't saying much, since he's very proud of everything. But he's especially proud of his Twitter prowess. "Many are saying I'm the best 140-character writer in the world," he once tweeted, with trademark reserve. And in a way, he has a point. Twitter was made for Donald Trump, conducive to his staccato delivery, short attention span, and penchant for covering himself and others in shame.

The D: hot for Rob?

He does frequently fire off a funny one-liner, which is even funnier when you picture him saying it: "I have never seen a thin person drinking Diet Coke." But for the most part, his tweets serve two purposes: telling the world how great he is ("My twitter has become so powerful that I can actually make my enemies tell the truth") or how much of a loser everyone else is ("Word is that @NBCNews is firing sleepy eyes Chuck Todd in that his ratings on Meet the Press are setting record lows. He's a real loser!").

Last fall, the *Boston Globe* analyzed candidates' 2016 presidential campaign announcement speeches using the Flesch-Kincaid readability test, an algorithm that assesses everything from word choice to sentence structure and then spits out a grade-level ranking. If there's any doubt that our politics are getting dumber, it should be noted that George Washington's Farewell Address rates at a graduate-degree level. And the top of this year's pile, among both Republicans and Democrats, was former Virginia governor Jim Gilmore, who apparently talks to us (not that anyone's listening) at an 11th-grade level.

Keeping it much simpler for the common folk (at least for the ones whose houses he's not trying to swipe), Trump, of course, ranked dead last. His announcement speech, says the *Globe*, "could have been comprehended by a fourth-grader. Yes, a fourth-grader." Though no analysis was done of Trump's tweets, I'd be shocked if a first-grader couldn't get the gist.

I spent an hour or so printing out pages of tweets, after conducting searches of Trump's Twitter feed using many of his favorite insult-buzzwords, and here's what I found:

"Moron"—3½ pages

"Lightweight"—4½ pages

"Loser"—4 pages

"Dummy"—6 pages

"Dope"—3 pages (Though Harry Hurt, "who wrote a failed book about me" (*Lost Tycoon*), made two lists simultaneously as a "dummy dope.")

I grew bored and quit before finishing a search for "poo-poo head."

Nobody in politics, journalism, or celebrity-world who criticizes Trump escapes his Twitter wrath. Why, even my own boss Bill Kristol, in Trump's tweets, is "a sad case, his magazine is failing badly." My colleague Steve Hayes (who ranks a whole page and a half of Trump heckling unto himself) is a "failed writer and pundit . . . with no success and little talent."

Even though it's no longer a status symbol to get insulted by Trump, since he pretty much insults everybody, it's enough to make a guy feel left out. So I went to one of the numerous online Trump-insult generators, and was assigned my own: "This idiot Matt Labash has failed miserably. We're not dealing with Albert Einstein. SO SAD."

Trump does have a softer side, however. Especially when it comes to teen-heartthrob vampire-movie stars. When *Twilight*'s Robert Pattinson and Kristen Stewart hit the skids offscreen after Stewart allegedly cheated, Trump seemed to take it personally, as the Pattinson/Stewart tweets fill a whole page. It all kicked off with: "Robert Pattinson should not take back Kristen Stewart. She cheated on him like a dog & will do it again—just watch. He can do much better!"

Over the course of the next month, Trump mourned that the relationship "will never be the same. It is permanently broken." He cautioned Pattinson, "Be smart, Robert." He mentioned that the Miss Universe pageant—which Trump then owned—would soon be airing and that an "open invite stands for Robert Pattinson" to attend.

Twilight, of course, is about forbidden love. And Trump's Pattinson fixation got some talking about the love that dare not speak its name. Except it's Twitter, of course, where everything is always spoken. So Twitter user "broken urinal" wondered: "Is Donald Trump like gay for Robert Pattinson?"

VII. LADIES TRUMP LOVED, AND THE ONE WHO GOT AWAY

While I don't pretend to speak for Mr. Trump, I can say with some certitude that he's not gay for Robert Pattinson or anyone else. Ladies love The Donald, and The Donald loves them back. Being a gentleman, he doesn't really like to talk about it. Except when he does. Such as in his 2007 book, the title of which I'm not making up: *Think Big & Kick Ass in Business and Life*.

Here, Trump tells us that "I always think of myself as the best-looking guy and it is no secret that I love beautiful women. That is why I bought the *Miss USA* and *Miss Universe* pageants. . . . The women I have dated over the years could have any man they want; they are the top models and most beautiful women in the world. I have been able to date (screw) them all because I have something that many men do not have. I don't know what it is but women have always liked it."

Just a guess: billions of dollars?


Trump at a film screening with model Kara Young

Unlike Trump's friend Geraldo Rivera, who he says "did something which I thought was absolutely terrible. . . . He wrote a book naming many of the famous women that he slept with." Trump would "never do that." Except for that time he went on Howard Stern's radio show to cross swords with gossip columnist A. J. Benza, who claimed his model girlfriend, Kara Young, had cheated on him with Trump. Trump didn't seem to mind: "I've been successful with your girlfriend, I'll tell you that."

But whatever. Trump writes that he would never pull a Geraldo move, since "I have too much respect for women in general, but if I did, the world would take serious notice. Beautiful, famous, successful, married—I've had them all, secretly, the world's biggest names, but unlike Geraldo I don't talk about it. If I did, this book would sell 10 million copies (maybe it will anyway). The one thing I have learned with women over the years—they want it (sex!) more than we do."

Trump seems to have settled down nicely with his third wife, Melania, who is young enough to be his daughter. Though he seems to have sized up his actual daughter, Ivanka, as well. As Trump once told *The View* when asked how he'd feel if she posed for *Playboy*: "I don't think Ivanka would do that, although she does have a very nice figure. I've said if Ivanka weren't my daughter, perhaps I'd be dating her."

Incest aside, the problem with dating/marrying younger women, of course, is that they tend to age. Sometimes after loving them, you have to leave them. This can get uncomfortable, even for the world's most successful, classy, terrific person. As one Trump intimate tells me, when Trump was going to break things off with his second wife Marla Maples before the relatively modest prenup-limit expired and he'd have been on the hook for more money, Trump didn't have the stomach to tell her. So, the intimate says, "He leaked it to the *Daily News*, left the paper on the bed, and he went out to breakfast."

Now that's class.

But at heart, Trump is a romantic. And Trump has said that much of romance is about the challenge. The singer Michael Bolton once told me that after Trump broke up with Maples, Bolton started dating her, which made Trump so jealous, that he took her back. "But then when he could have her," says Bolton, "he didn't want her anymore."

A less than world-class tremendous amazing person might settle merely for bragging about the women that he's had. But Trump, it seems, even brags about the women he'll never have. In 1997, shortly after the death of Princess Diana, Trump appeared on *Dateline*. While we were all mourning England's rose, Trump took it harder than the rest of us. Diana's candle not only burned out long before her legend ever did, but also before Trump could ask her out.

"I would have loved to have had a shot to date her," he told Stone Phillips, "because she was an absolutely wonderful woman."

"Do you think you would have had a shot?" asked Phillips.

"I think so, yeah," The Donald responded. "I always have a shot."

VIII. A DONALD TRUMP JOKE

Apologies to Mr. Trump if that subhead read like I was suggesting he is a joke. He most certainly is not. He is a very serious person. Don't believe me? Let him tell it: "I am a very serious person," he said in 2011, right around the time he was seriously inquiring whether Barack Obama was an American citizen.

What I meant to say is that I have a Donald Trump joke. Actually, it's not mine. It was told to me by a former Trump-world executive, who says Trumpsters liked to tell it amongst themselves, as it captures a certain essence. But since it's a little salty, with mature themes and adult language, and since I am a family-friendly writer, I will let him have the floor:

> So Donald Trump is riding in an elevator. The elevator doors open, and a gorgeous blonde steps in. She sees him, and says, "Oh my God, you're Donald Trump!" And he

RICHARD CORKERY / NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

says, "Yes, I am." And she says, "Can I suck your *$@!?" And he says, "What's in it for me?"

IX. THE DONALD AND ME: A LOVE/HATE STORY

If you'll permit me to close with a personal anecdote, back in 1999, when Trump was just playing at being a presidential candidate, instead of leading the pack, I accompanied him, along with a small group of reporters, on a several-day swing through California as he was sizing up the Reform party nomination. I generally detest campaign stories, as they're typically populated by politicians, who on average tend to be some of the dreariest people on earth. But I have to admit, traveling with Trump was a romp.

We got into tussles with Whoopi Goldberg's people, who would not relinquish the coveted spot by the rooftop pool of the L'Ermitage Beverly Hills hotel. Therefore Trump, in his opening press conference, was taking the sun straight in his eyes, making him squint more than usual as reporters availed themselves of hand sanitizers set out in a fishbowl. (Germophobe Trump thinks shaking hands is "barbaric.")

We spun by *The Tonight Show*, where Jay Leno razzed Trump backstage, as Trump was there to plug whatever book his ghostwriter had written at the time, the revenue from which, he assured me, would merely pay for his "airplane fuel to go back and forth from California." We went to the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance, "a world-class human rights laboratory," where a rabbi walked us through re-creations of the Warsaw Ghetto and Auschwitz, with Trump muttering to the rabbi, "Great location!"

On his plane, Trump was a (literal) arm-puncher and towel-snapper. We laughed at his jokes. Drank his booze. Politely nodded yes when he asked if we wanted to sit in the cockpit. Enjoyed hours of off-the-record locker-room chitchat. His campaign was absurd, but he was a great host—a real barrel of monkeys.

I found Trump hilarious, which was much easier to do back when he didn't have even an outside shot at becoming president of the United States. After going home, I wrote up my travels in a semi-barbed story that I'd characterize as "begrudgingly affectionate." But after filing it, some loser editor headlined the piece "A Chump on the Stump." When I later asked a Trump aide what Trump thought of the profile, I was told, "He never got past the headline."

Roughly one year later, I ran into Trump at a party. As I rounded a bend, I smacked right into him and Melania, his supermodel girlfriend, now his wife. (Whether she was actually ever a "supermodel," as opposed to just a really-competent model, I can't say. But when you're in Trump's company, you tend to fall into the same hyperbole that he does.)

I thought about ducking Trump, but decided to take my medicine like a man. I reintroduced myself, reminding him of how he knew me. "I remember you," Trump said. A promising start. But then he continued, "And I think you know what I think of you. Not much. Now head out."

When Donald Trump is miffed at you in person, he does carry a natural air of authority. So I reflexively turned on my heels to head out. Except then I remembered, I was having fun at this party. And it wasn't his party. I was an invited guest. Why would I leave? So I turned around to inform him of this cold, harsh reality—that I had zero intention of heading anywhere. When I did, Trump said nothing. He just clasped Melania's hand, then headed out of the room himself, leaving me in billionaire/competent-model stardust.

Trump writes that he would never kiss and tell, since 'I have too much respect for women in general, but if I did, the world would take serious notice. Beautiful, famous, successful, married—I've had them all, secretly, the world's biggest names.'

You might think I'd be sore for receiving the high hat. After all, we had history. Trump and I had been to hell and back together. Or at least to Reform party meetings and the Auschwitz re-creation. But I wasn't sore. Not even a little. Instead, I had respect for Donald Trump. While Washington parties are usually chock-full of people who quietly loathe each other while doling out backslaps and air kisses, Trump seemed to hate me and wasn't about to pretend otherwise. Even if he had to sacrifice his own enjoyment to prove his point.

It caused me to flash back to our trip. At one stop in Anaheim, we went to a Tony Robbins conference, where The Donald was doling out successory-wisdom to a crowd of desperate Babbitts, while getting paid 100 grand for 20 minutes' work. He shocked both the crowd and Tony Robbins with his unconventional advice, everything from "always have a pre-nup" to "people tend to be very vicious—keep the left up."

But what really impressed itself upon me, the edict that seems to be Trump's guiding principle and, by extension, that of those who follow him, was: "Get even. When somebody screws you, screw 'em back, but a lot harder."

I had to hand it to the guy, and have to even still. He sticks by his principles. Or principle. It may be the only one in his arsenal, but by God, he sticks to it. ♦

Foothills at Zabriskie Point, near the Nevada border

Death Valley Days

And nights

By Geoffrey Norman

The name, you think when you first lay eyes upon the place, says it all. The wide, shimmering flat that is streaked with white that you know without being told is salt. The hard, angular mountains with no sign of vegetation growing on their slopes. The washed out colors—reds, browns, copper. The absence of sound even though it seems there should be some air moving.

Death Valley, indeed.

It is stark and desolate, just like you would expect. But it doesn't take long for the senses—especially one's sight—to adapt and to begin to see, and appreciate, the formidable beauty of this place. And only a little longer than that, you find yourself taken by the austere beauty and thinking you'd like to stay a while. Get off the road and go into the back country. The landscape has not changed or become more inviting. But you begin to feel something for its majesty.

Natural bridge near Furnace Creek

Death Valley is the largest national park in the lower 48. Over three million acres. It was brought into the system as a "monument" in 1933 before it was upgraded to "park" status 60 years later. Perhaps because it was felt that a desert didn't really deserve to be called a park. Deserts were wastelands, unlike the more verdant lands to the north, like Yellowstone, that were designated parks.

But if the point of the park system is to preserve unique ecosystems and habitats, then Death Valley undeniably belongs, as even the most dubious visitor begins to agree after a few miles on the road from Furnace Creek to Stovepipe Wells. (If there were nothing else to recommend it, Death Valley owns some exquisite placenames.)

A few miles south of Furnace Creek, there is a place called Badwater, the site of the lowest elevation in North America: 282 feet below sea level. This section of the park is a wonder of geology where you can marvel at what time, wind, sand, and water can do to rock, creating a field of formations so wicked and forbidding that, as someone

TOP, XANTERRA; BELOW, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Geoffrey Norman, a writer in Vermont, is a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard.

A storm approaching the Badwater Salt Flats

once said, "only the devil could play golf on such rough links."

Also in this section of the park, one can marvel at the various colors and hues in the rock of a segment called Artist's Palette. Take in what is called Dante's View, which is among the park's most magnificent vistas. From this point, you can look across the lowest elevation in the park and beyond, to the highest—Telescope Peak, at slightly better than 11,000 feet and capped with snow in the winter. The juxtaposition might, literally, take your breath away.

The road north to Stovepipe Wells skirts a valley that was once a lake and still holds water in spots and in amounts that vary with the season. But it is, mostly, a vast salt flat. Which brings us to the Salt Creek turnoff. This takes you to a parking area and walking path along an intermittent little stream that seems improbable here in the desert. But not so much as the little pupfish that live here and nowhere else, having adapted like the other creatures native to this tough environment. On the roadside, depending on the season, you might see some blooming brittle bush flowers. They are a sort of yellow in color and look oddly gay out here in the desert.

From here, on to Stovepipe, the road runs by a spot where arrowweed plants grow with the roots exposed in a way that suggests cornstalks and, thus, the name "devil's cornfield." Also along this stretch, there are the mesquite dunes, where the wind has mounded sand that is mostly bare and lifeless except for the occasional track of a coyote.

There are pullouts and paths along this route, which make the park and its marvels accessible and easy to view. But after a while, one feels like getting off the road and back into the country. Deep enough, at least, to get away from traffic noise. Though, in truth, the roads are not heavily traveled.

There are many tracks suitable for four-wheel drive and trails for hiking, and it is possible to get deep into the park. But this is something that shouldn't be done without a little planning and preparation, even if you are just going in a little ways on foot.

TOP, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE; MAP, THE WEEKLY STANDARD

If it didn't already have a reputation for being hostile to human habitation, the park is one of the few areas left in North America where GPS is unreliable and cell service more or less nonexistent. Furthermore, it is a desert, and you need to dress and pack accordingly. Take in plenty of water. But if you do want to get off the highway and you are prepared, the experience can be unique and sublime.

Just beyond Stovepipe, there is a rough road that leads up into what is called Mosaic Canyon. It is slow-going in a sedan but can be done. After a couple of miles, you will come to a parking area where you can leave your vehicle and start along a trail that leads through a cleft in the giant wall of rock.

It turns cool and shady once you are inside. And hauntingly quiet. You can hear your own breathing and, possibly, your pulse if your heart is running fast from the walk. The trail meanders in places, narrow enough to feel like a hallway, with formidable walls of rock on either side. There is almost nothing but rock. Only the occasional and opportunistic creosote bush growing out of a crevice where something like soil has collected.


Devil's Golf Course


Mosaic Canyon

A couple of hundred yards in, you come to a place where you need to scramble up a low face of the rock. You'll put your hands and feet on the rock but nothing sticks. It is smooth and slick as the face of a mirror. The rock is dolomite, a kind of marble, polished by eons of wind and water.

The trail winds and the gap between the walls widens enough to let the sun in. Even in January, a walk up this trail will be warm work, and you will realize the wisdom behind the ubiquitous park warnings to take plenty of water with you when you go into the back country.

It is only an hour or two, in and out, but the walk has a feel to it. The road—and a lot of other things—seems far, far behind, and you are reduced to a pleasant sort of insignificance.

There is another road, further beyond Stovepipe Wells, the run to Emigrant. You can take this one to a trailhead where you can start in for Telescope Peak. This is a much more ambitious undertaking, and you would have made sure someone knew you were going in—and to come looking for you if you weren't back by a certain hour. The last stretch of this hike will, in some seasons, require crampons and an ice ax. It's possible to hike both Telescope Peak and Badwater—the highest and lowest points in the park—on the same day.

Along the Emigrant road, as elsewhere in the park, there is evidence of a time when, despite its name and the hardships that came with its terrain and weather, people tried to make a living out of Death Valley. They mined this ground for copper and gold and other minerals and, especially, for borax. The ruins of some of the old, paid-out mining operations stand forlornly along the side of the road. And you can hike back to old mine sites where the shafts are still open but you are advised, sternly, not to enter.

You wonder who would be tempted.

On the way out, in the late afternoon, you sense the temperature dropping. It grows cold quickly, and in the last part of the day, the solitary creatures that live here become more active. A pair of very lean coyotes might be lingering around your vehicle, hoping for a handout.

The day can end just about anywhere in the park. The sunsets are, everywhere, both rich and subtle, bringing up the color in the barren hillsides and the patchy flats. The desert colors, dawn and dusk, are unlike those of any other environment.

But if the day ends at sunset, the glories of the desert do not. Death Valley is, perhaps, the finest place in North America for going out in the late night and looking up into the heavens. There is no light pollution from cities or towns, and when you look up, the sheer number of stars is enough to make you reel.

This may, perhaps, be the essence of the Death Valley experience. It is about time and vastness. ♦

TOP, WILSON44691; BELOW, GETTY IMAGES

Timothy Bottoms in The Paper Chase *(1973)*

Looking Backward

Harvard Law School as seen from 2016. BY G. EDWARD WHITE

This history of Harvard Law School in its first century (1817-1917) appears at a time when several American colleges and universities are revisiting, and in some instances seeking to revise, their pasts. The revisionist impulses originate in a perceived dissonance between values currently endorsed by members of the educational institutions and the actions or attitudes of some of their prominent alumni or benefactors. Yale is contemplating removing the name of John C. Calhoun from one of its residential colleges, and Princeton is considering renaming its Woodrow Wilson School of Public Affairs. The revisionism, in both cases, has been prompted by the namesakes' perceived notoriety: Calhoun as an apologist for slavery and the dissolution of the Union; Wilson as a supporter, while president, of segregationist policies predicated on the inferiority of African Americans.

On the Battlefield of Merit
Harvard Law School, the First Century
by Daniel R. Coquillette
and Bruce A. Kimball
Harvard, 688 pp., $39.95

The logic of this revisionism would seem to point to something like the end of serious historical inquiry into the pasts of contemporary American educational institutions. Scrubbing an institution's heritage clean of all transgressing figures rather than seeking to comprehend their roles as historical actors amounts to a suggestion that the past should be eradicated when it is perceived as embarrassing.

Still, there is something to be said for infusing historical inquiry with moral reflection. Being exposed to the acts or attitudes of historical actors

G. Edward White is the David and Mary Harrison distinguished professor of law at the University of Virginia and the author, most recently, of Law in American History, Volume I: From the Colonial Years Through the Civil War.

20TH CENTURY FOX / EVERETT COLLECTION

that appear deplorable from a contemporary perspective can amount to a moral stock-taking in which one asks what could have prompted ancestors to act or think in that fashion, so that condemnation can become a form of recentering one's own moral compass. But a challenge for those seeking to do serious historical scholarship remains: the need to understand the conduct of past actors before judging them by contemporary standards.

When the scholarship is directed at the most visible law school in America, that challenge is accentuated. Daniel Coquillette and Bruce Kimball begin by noting that previous attempts to write the history of Harvard Law School have fallen into two categories: celebratory efforts glossing the school's accomplishments and minimizing its failures, and "attack histories" maintaining that the school's late-20th-century prominence was accompanied by the faculty's and administration's callous attitude toward students. Both sets of prior institutional histories, they conclude, "lack context and tend to be partisan, one way or the other."

Coquillette and Kimball describe themselves as "not partisans." They were "not invited by the dean . . . [nor] . . . authorized or supported by" Harvard Law School in their undertaking, and thus their work may have "a bit more detachment" than previous histories. That statement is slightly misleading because they acknowledge the support of several deans of the law school for the Harvard Law School History Project, under which they enlisted numerous Harvard students to aid their research, and of the "invaluable directors of the Historical & Special Collections Department at Harvard Law School Library," who helped facilitate their access to archival records. Without that help, the authors recognize, "this project would have been close to impossible."

And in at least two instances Coquillette and Kimball's extensive access to internal records of the law school has enabled them to improve upon prior accounts of Harvard's history. They demonstrate that the school's performance in the years between 1848 and 1869—in which, under a "triumvirate" of professors, Joel Parker, Theophilus Parsons, and Emory Washburn, it had no admissions requirements, no examinations or grades, an unsystematic curriculum, and tedious lectures and class recitations—needs to be seen in the context of American legal education at the time.

Most persons training for the legal profession in the mid-19th century prepared for admission to state bars by "reading law," which typically meant copying down doctrinal rules and propositions they found in legal treatises such as American editions of William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Law of England*. Proprietary law schools, whose only requirement for admission was the ability to pay fees, attempted a more systematic version of apprenticeship, featuring lectures on legal subjects and the creation of "copybooks" in which students would retain summaries of material from the lectures or treatises.

Harvard's approach to legal education in the middle of the 19th century was to provide an even more structured version of apprenticeship. Internal records demonstrate that it offered lectures based on (and supplementing) assigned treatises, coupled with classroom "recitations" designed to test the students's grasp of the rules and propositions to which they had been introduced. In using this "text and recitation" method of instruction, the law school was duplicating the standard techniques of instruction employed at the time at Harvard College. Moreover, the law school under Parsons, Parker, and Washburn exposed students to "moot courts," in which they would simulate arguments in actual cases, and created the Assembly, an organization in which students debated a variety of contemporary social and economic issues, with the conspicuous exception of slavery.

The years of the triumvirate have regularly been portrayed in previous histories along the lines of Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. and Alexander G. Sedgwick's 1870 critique, which described Harvard as "doing something every year . . . to discourage real students." After Coquillette and Kimball's research, that image of the school can best be seen as created by the transformation of Harvard and other American law schools into post-undergraduate, professionalized institutions in the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

Another revision of the conventional history involves the deanship of Christopher Columbus Langdell, who, with the support of Harvard president Charles Eliot, presided over a school that, between 1870 and 1895, sought to establish itself as a post-undergraduate institution with admissions standards, written examinations, uniform baselines for grading, class standing, and the appointment of new faculty from the ranks of recent law school graduates who lacked substantial experience in practice. Most prominent of Langdell's reforms in the conventional account was his introduction of a "case method" of instruction in which professors substituted "casebooks" (collections of opinions rendered by appellate courts in common law cases) for treatises and taught legal subjects through exchanges between themselves and students in which legal doctrines featured in the opinions were analyzed.

By the second decade of the 20th century the reforms instituted at Harvard had become widely adopted in other American law schools, giving rise (in prior histories of Harvard and elsewhere) to a triumphalist narrative of Langdell's deanship as the founding of modern legal education. Coquillette and Kimball's review of documents in the law school's special collections and the Harvard University archives demonstrates, however, that although Langdell himself supported each of these reforms, all of them, with the exception of a sequenced curriculum, were opposed by some or all of Langdell's faculty colleagues, and the reforms were not fully put in place until Langdell's retirement.

These examples represent substantial advances on previous historical accounts of those episodes in Harvard's history because of their skillful

invocation of historical context. As one learns more about mid-19th-century American university and legal education and more about the reactions of Dean Langdell's colleagues to his professionalizing impulses, richer portraits of the years of the triumvirate and those of Langdell's deanship emerge. But on other occasions, particularly with respect to issues that seem provocative to 21st-century audiences, Coquillette and Kimball's posture seems to depart from the "detachment" to which they aspire.

In their introduction, after describing their posture as nonpartisan, Coquillette and Kimball state that the history they are exploring "poses a living challenge. It dares us to examine our own biases and assumptions. It asks if we have the courage and humility to defend what is priceless in our institutional roots, and to reform what is wrong and defective." They maintain that "the leaders of the Law School's first century pursued a transformative and radical vision," and "today, the Law School's duty is to make the best of that vision real and to forthrightly amend the rest."

By the conclusion of *On the Battlefield of Merit* it is apparent not only what the authors believe to be "priceless" in Harvard's history but what they believe to be "wrong and defective." The "priceless" contributions of Harvard have been its "three radical" ideas: connecting a law school to a university; seeking not merely to educate students from localities adjacent to the school but to train a "national elite" of lawyers drawn from all over the United States; and most tellingly, installing "merit," equated with exemplary academic performance, as the principal criterion for entry into the upper echelons of the legal profession.

Coquillette and Kimball's emphasis on Harvard's ostensible preoccupation with merit provides them with a baseline for determining what was "wrong and defective" in the first century of its history. The "wrong and defective" episodes represent instances in which the idea of making meritorious performance the basis for success in the legal profession, and in American society generally, was abandoned.

We are introduced to a catalogue of those instances: the decision of a slaveowner to found the law school; opposition to the prospective appointment of Charles Sumner to the faculty because of Sumner's outspoken attacks on slavery; the purposeful decision on the part of the triumvirate to bar discussions of slavery or secession in the 1850s, years in which the law school continued to attract students from the South; and Harvard's disinclination, even after meritocratic criteria for admission and ranking were introduced during the deanships of Langdell and his successor James Barr Ames, to admit women and graduates of Roman Catholic colleges.

The authors pass judgment on each of these episodes. Isaac Royall Jr., "whose fortune was based in part on the cruel sugar cane plantations of Antigua," was "hardly the ideal founder of a school devoted to the study of law and justice." Moreover, "it was the rejected Charles Sumner, and not [the triumvirate], who grasped what would be later seen as the obvious moral and political truth about slavery." And by "declar[ing] women a categorical exception to the standard of academic merit" and "applying closer scrutiny" to Catholic college graduates, Harvard's "meritocrats" sought to preserve "their commitment to academic merit and to justice," while "discriminating invidiously."

Such comments serve to displace the historical context that Coquillette and Kimball have supplied in other places. Instead of making efforts to understand why prominent actors in Harvard's history might have tolerated slavery or instinctively concluded that neither women nor graduates of Catholic colleges were suited to enter the legal profession, Coquillette and Kimball seem content with labeling those attitudes "wrong and defective." If added historical context seems appropriate in recounting the educational decisions of the triumvirate, or Christopher Langdell, why not here? To contextualize attitudes that currently may seem deplorable is not to justify them. It is, rather, to seek to recover the ways in which historical actors sought to make sense of their experience.

Amassing wealth through the enslavement of other humans, declining to confront the moral implications of perpetuating slavery in America, and treating women and Catholics as less meritorious candidates for the legal profession because of their gender or religion are likely to be regarded as wrong by the overwhelming majority of current readers. But the challenge of historical scholarship is to understand how prominent Americans in past generations could have engaged in such practices and entertained such ideas.

When historical research reveals that people occupying positions of leadership in a visible and prominent American law school concluded that it was socially appropriate and intellectually defensible to single out persons of African ancestry for enslavement or to treat the status of being female or Catholic as a disqualification for the practice of law, calling those decisions "wrong" should be just the beginning of the historian's inquiry. The next steps should involve the same sort of extended inquiry into the historical context of those decisions—their origins, starting assumptions, and purported justifications—that Coquillette and Kimball have made for many other features of the history of Harvard Law School.

On the Battlefield of Merit surpasses all previous histories of Harvard Law School in the breadth and depth of its research base, giving one confidence in the authenticity of many of its findings. Still, especially in light of the current efforts of American educational institutions to revisit their pasts, it is an unsettling book. Unsettling because it reveals that doing historical scholarship runs the constant risk of being overwhelmed by current value judgments, judgments that can tempt the historian to substitute epithets for efforts to recover context. When those judgments predominate in historical scholarship, they serve to block efforts to understand how historical actors sought to make sense of and shape their worlds—and the past ceases to become past and becomes all about us. ♦

B&A

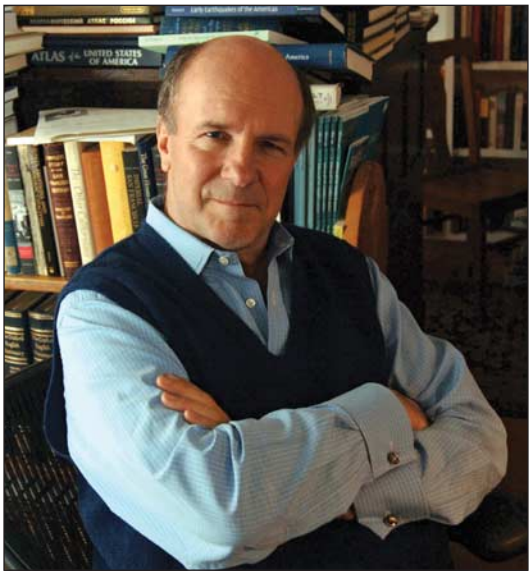
Westward, Ho

The billowing waves get the bilious treatment.

BY ELIZABETH POWERS

Mix together John McPhee, Paul Theroux, and V.S. Naipaul—geology, travel, and history and politics—and distill the mixture, and one has a good idea of Simon Winchester's particular gift. Like these three writers, Winchester wields intelligence, observation, and masterful narrative skills to portray the modern world in which we live, a world in which the center no longer holds, the sea of faith has retreated, and the ground below our feet is literally in motion. Empires rise, empires fall. Such a transition is now in progress, according to Winchester's account in *Pacific*: "The future . . . is what the Pacific Ocean is now coming to symbolize . . . the inland sea of Tomorrow's World." In the process, Yesterday's World, so to speak (the West), is sailing into the sunset of superannuated great powers.

Pacific
Silicon Chips and Surfboards, Coral Reefs and Atom Bombs, Brutal Dictators, Fading Empires, and the Coming Collision of the World's Superpowers
by Simon Winchester
HarperCollins, 512 pp., $28.99



Simon Winchester

Winchester made the same claim back in 1992, with *Pacific Rising: The Emergence of a New World Culture*. A similar prediction was made in 1852 by the senator William H. Seward: "The Pacific Ocean, its shores, its islands will become the great theater of events in the world . . . henceforth European commerce, European thought . . . will sink in importance." Perhaps it was for that reason that Secretary of State Seward negotiated the 1867 purchase of Alaska, fondly known as "Seward's Folly."

Since achieving widespread popularity with his 1998 bestseller, *The Professor and the Madman: A Tale of Murder, Insanity, and the Making of the Oxford English Dictionary* (he is partial to long subtitles), Simon Winchester has leveraged this distillate of geology, travel, and history into several well-regarded books. These include *The Map That Changed the World: William Smith and the Birth of Modern Geology* (2001), *Krakatoa: The Day the World Exploded: August 27, 1883* (2003), *The Man Who Loved China: The Fantastic Story of the Eccentric Scientist Who Unlocked the Mysteries of the Middle Kingdom* (2008), and *The Men Who United the States: America's Explorers, Inventors, Eccentrics, and Mavericks, and the Creation of One Nation, Indivisible* (2013).

An underlying theme of these volumes is the tension between mankind's civilizing mission, relentlessly shedding the encumbering past, and the obstacles that the natural world poses to this mission. Winchester is an admirer of man's ingenuity, and as a master of the evocative simile, he writes a compelling story. *Pacific*, on the other hand, is short on admiration, and one has the feeling that Winchester has lost his narrative bearings in the large ocean. His next-to-last book, *Atlantic: Great Sea Battles, Heroic Discoveries, Titanic Storms, and a Vast Ocean of a Million Stories* (2010) is a gauge of *Pacific*'s shortcomings.

Both books are about man's relationship with nature—in this case, with the oceans that occupy 71 percent of the Earth's surface. *Atlantic* begins at the beginning, with the ocean's origins, 130 million years ago. Along with the well-known story of the discovery of the Americas, the book ranges from Mediterranean man's avoidance of the Atlantic to the gradual conquest of this body of water via intellectual and technological understanding. All of these subjects, even war (in the Falkland Islands), have over the course of several centuries linked disparate nations into an "Atlantic community" with similar, if often competitive, interests. By the new millennium, however, awe and terror have been replaced by ho-hum: For the modern traveler, the ocean has become little more than "an accommodating parcel of *distance*." Winchester reminds us, however, that it is a living thing, moving "impressively and ceaselessly."

Here is the kind of prose that has made his books so popular:

> It generates all kinds of noise—it is forever roaring, thundering, boiling, crashing, swelling, lapping. It is easy to imagine it trying to draw breath—perhaps not so noticeably out in mid-ocean, but where it

STEPHEN ROSE / GETTY IMAGES

Elizabeth Powers is writing a memoir of the ascendance of contemporary liberalism.

> encounters land, its waters sifting up and down a gravel beach, it mimics nearly perfectly the steady inspirations and exhalations of a living creature. It crawls with symbiotic existences, too: unimaginable quantities of monsters, minute and massive alike, churn within its depths in a kind of maritime harmony, giving to the waters a feeling of vibration, a kind of suboceanic pulse. And it has a psychology. It has moods: sometimes dour and sullen, on rare occasions cunning and playful; always it is pondering and powerful.

Think about that the next time you are flying over the Atlantic on a 747.

The problem in *Pacific* begins with the book's structure, which Winchester acknowledges in his preface to have been inspired by Stefan Zweig's *Sternstunden der Menschheit* (1927) narrative about hinge moments in history. (It begins with Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo and ends with "[Woodrow] Wilson's Failure.") This turns out to be a deeply pessimistic way of proceeding. Yet, alongside well-crafted, *New Yorker*-style essays that may or may not be historically decisive—e.g., the recovery of surfboarding in Hawaii, the scientific discovery of deep ocean hydrothermal vents, or the development of Sony's transistor radios in 1954—only one chapter describes a global power shift and, perhaps, a true "hinge of history."

This is the final, and quite sobering, chapter: "Of Masters and Commanders." It begins with the eruption of a Philippine volcano in 1991, so disruptive that it led to the evacuation by the United States of its two major military bases in the Philippines. The resulting vacuum has been rapidly filled by the Chinese, as shown by the sighting in 2006 of a Chinese submarine in Philippine waters. By Winchester's reckoning, October 26, 2006, serves as a reference marker for "the Chinese navy's steady and relentless expansion" in the South China Sea and a policy, basically, of owning the Pacific. For instance, China is disputing the notion of international waters and claiming ownership of coral reefs and uninhabited islands all across the South China Sea, where "weather observation stations" are being built.

I don't have the impression that Winchester welcomes this development, but throughout *Pacific* there is a kind of gloating concerning the loss of "[the West's] hitherto unshakable belief in our own kingly virtues," as illustrated by the capture of the USS *Pueblo* by the North Koreans in 1968; the destruction and sinking of the RMS *Queen Elizabeth*, the "greatest old ship of the British Empire," in Hong Kong harbor in 1972; and the departure of the United States from Vietnam. (The onus for "the dire and dangerous irritation" of North Korea is, of course, on the United States.)

In *Atlantic*, Winchester wrote that the ocean had become "a fulcrum, around which the power and influence of the modern world has long been distributed." From the evidence of *Pacific*, however, the prospect of the West's withdrawal, and a redistribution in favor of the larger ocean, is mixed. If China does come one day to own the Pacific, will the other countries on the ocean's rim consider themselves "Pacific nations" in the same way that Europe, the Americas, and even much of today's Africa are "Atlantic nations"? What are the commonalities between, say, the goals of China (no mention by Winchester of the Cultural Revolution of the late 1960s) and of the Muslim-majority nation of Indonesia (no mention of the mass killings there of suspected Communists in 1965)—or even of the west coast of South America?

What role do the only authentically Pacific countries play in this scenario—namely, the islands where the life of the indigenous peoples has been fashioned by geography: "Oceania" (Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia, including Hawaii)? No such questions are considered. The chapter on Australia is *Pacific*'s biggest missed opportunity: Winchester goes on at length concerning the opera house in Sydney, while condescendingly berating the country for its failure to be a Pacific leader because of its "intolerant" refugee policy.

In any case, Winchester's real interest lies elsewhere, in the environmental realm. Thus, the story of *Pacific* begins not with the ocean's origins, but in 1950—at lunchtime on January 4, to be precise—when President Harry Truman alluded in his State of the Union address to his decision to authorize the development of the hydrogen bomb.

The year 1950 is also a scientific time marker, having been established as year zero (BP, or "Before Present") by geologists and archaeologists for determining the age of organic materials by carbon dating. In part, this date was chosen because the atmosphere has since been polluted by decades of nuclear testing—for instance, by the Castle Bravo test of the H-bomb on Bikini Atoll in 1954, which is the subject of the first chapter, "The Great Thermonuclear Sea." Winchester is at his best in describing the destruction that transformed Bikini's islands and lagoon into "a hellish gyre of ruin and mayhem" and, because of the "cynically calculated negligence" of Alvin Graves, the director of the test, led to the failure to evacuate in timely manner residents of neighboring islands who were exposed to radiation.

But what is the lesson to be learned from this episode? Blame and outrage at such foul-ups are not enough. Going forward, especially in connection with protecting the ecological future of the ocean, Winchester simply recommends the acquisition of "Eastern wisdom and knowledge."

> Instead of aircraft carriers and pollution, garbage gyres and coral bleaching being the bywords of our presence, there should now be a fresh kind of lexicon. Respect, reverence, accommodation, and awe for much that the East stands for. . . . For from these ancient calming cultures, there is very much more to learn and absorb than there is to fear and resist.

Unfortunately, this kind of wisdom will not solve the problems Winchester addresses. A better tribute to his skills would have been a clear-headed investigation of the technological and scientific ingenuity that is now being applied to solve them. His past books indicate he is up to the task. ♦

B&A

His Gimlet Eye

John Aubrey and the spectacle of 17th-century England.

BY DANNY HEITMAN

Celebrity gossip is such a fixture of modern life that it's easy to assume we invented it. But long before TMZ, the E! channel, and *People* began chronicling the lives of the glitterati, the Englishman John Aubrey (1626-1697) was jotting juicy tidbits about his contemporaries and near-contemporaries in the cultural and political elite. Whether he was profiling Shakespeare or Thomas Hobbes, René Descartes or Erasmus, Ben Jonson or Sir Thomas More, Aubrey typically framed his subjects in no more than a handful of pages and sometimes as little as one. His brevity came less from design than from a native impatience with lingering on anything for very long.

Aubrey, a restless purveyor of the thumbnail sketch, defies easy summary himself. He had diverse talents, but no real occupation; many interests, but no clear vocation; reams of notes, but only one published work at the time of his death. Aubrey's friends didn't quite know what to make of him, just as generations of readers haven't quite known what to make of his principal legacy, a collection of his anecdotes about the great and the powerful called *Aubrey's Brief Lives*.

My local library keeps the *Lives* in its reference section, within solemn shelves of dictionaries, encyclopedias, and atlases, among the books meant to be consulted but not savored. It's a peculiar fate for a work that doesn't take itself too seriously and that, like any book of gossip, is filled with observations that are interesting and sometimes provocative, though not uniformly true. This is not a book, like *Webster*'s *Dictionary* or the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, that navigates by the fixed star of accuracy; it's a flight of fancy, an omnibus of oddments in the tradition of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. I like David R. Godine's sturdy softcover reprint of Oliver Lawson Dick's 1949 edition, which I dip into randomly as an antidote to boredom. Aubrey wasn't a systematic writer—his *Lives* is really more of a brainstorm than a book—and his hopscotching narrative liberates his readers to be as capricious as he is. I've skipped around *Lives* off and on and here and there for years now, in the same way I might browse the dog-eared magazines at the dentist's, bent on casual entertainment rather than instruction. But Aubrey often manages to teach something in spite of himself.

John Aubrey

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY

His entry on William Shakespeare is a fair enough sample of his technique. The Bard had already been dead a decade when Aubrey was born. From scraps of local lore, Aubrey assembles his crazy-quilt chronicle, the narrative stitched together by gossamer threads of hearsay and speculation:

> Mr. William Shakespeare was borne at Stratford upon Avon in the County of Warwick. His father was a Butcher, and I have been told heretofore by some of the neighbours, that when he was a boy he exercised his father's Trade, but when he kill'd a Calfe he would doe it in high style, and make a Speech.

Beyond the place of Shakespeare's birth, everything else here seems either wrong or difficult to verify. Shakespeare's father was a glover, not a butcher, so the story about the future dramatist declaiming over a side of beef beggars belief. But the tale perhaps hints at what the Stratford folk *wanted* to be true about their hometown hero, which is a useful insight in itself. Shakespeare as the tradesman-playwright, using language to elevate his butcher's block into a pulpit—it all squares nicely with his legend, then in its embryonic state, as the people's poet.

Aubrey is a more plausible commentator when he writes about those with whom he had firsthand contact, such as Hobbes, a longtime friend. Despite his affection for Hobbes,

Danny Heitman, a columnist for the Advocate *in Baton Rouge, is the author of* A Summer of Birds: John James Audubon at Oakley House.

Aubrey's entry deftly refrains from arid hagiography. It shimmers with humanizing detail:

> His mother fell in labour with him upon the fright of the Invasion of the Spaniards. . . . When he was a Boy he was playsome enough, but withall he had even then a contemplative Melancholliniesse; he would gett him into a corner, and learn his Lesson by heart presently. His haire was black, and his schoolfellows were wont to call him *Crowe*.

The solemn thinker touched by the anxieties of his age, even in the womb, then distanced from his peers at the very start, an intellect apart from the crowd—this is all part of Aubrey's novelistic sensibility, in which description is seldom merely decorative, but almost invariably points to meaning. It's just like Aubrey to mention Hobbes's black mane, which hung like a shadow above a mind keen to humanity's darker potential: its instinctive capacity, if left unchecked, to yield a life that Hobbes famously described as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." Aubrey aimed his prose as much at the eye as the ear, suggesting (like any observer of celebrity) that how people looked might reveal how they lived. "If ever I had been good for anything," he once confessed, "'twould have been a painter, I could fancy a thing so strongly and have so clear an idea of it."

Aubrey could be salacious, catty, even downright mean, and these instances are what give his Lives *its faintly illicit tabloid pulse. His entry on Eleanor Radcliffe, a tissue of insult and innuendo, seems to anticipate the baser impulses of modern Fleet Street.*

"It was this powerful visual imagination which dominated his writing," Anthony Powell said of Aubrey, "and which, in the last resort, laid the foundation of his place in history." The title of Powell's 1948 biography—*John Aubrey and His Friends*—reminds us that Aubrey often wrote about people who were within, or connected to, his social circle, an intimacy that inclined him to pull his punches. He didn't have that instinct for the jugular we associate with the true gossip: As Oliver Lawson Dick noted, "Aubrey was so kind a man that his gossip rarely turned to scandal, and his wit, in Disraeli's phrase, was excessively good-natured, and, like champagne, not only sparkled, but was sweet."

But Aubrey could be salacious, catty, even downright mean, and these instances, though the exception rather than the rule, are what give his *Lives* its faintly illicit tabloid pulse. His entry on Eleanor Radcliffe, a tissue of insult and innuendo, seems to anticipate the baser impulses of modern Fleet Street. Notice his parenthetical asides, the grammatical equivalent of a raised eyebrow:

> Countess of Sussex, a great and sad example of the power of Lust and Slavery of it. She was as great a beautie as any in England, and had a good Witt. After her Lord's death (he was jealous) she sends for one (formerly her Footman) and makes him groom of the chamber. He had the Pox and shee knew it; a damnable Sott. He waz not very handsom, but his body of an exquisite shape (hinc sagittae). His Nostrils were stufft and borne out with corkes in which were quills to breath through. About 1666 this Countess died of the Pox.

Aubrey not only wrote gossip, but was frequently, we may assume, the subject of it; he had the kind of troubles people like to talk about. Edmund Wilson, a fan of the *Lives*, described Aubrey as

> an English country gentleman of lively intellectual interests but rather infirm character. He was, one suspects, made unsure of himself by an obtuse and obstructive father, and his life became a series of projects that almost invariably ended unsatisfactorily. His education at Oxford was interrupted by the Civil Wars; the estates he inherited from his father were heavily involved in lawsuits, and he was eventually obligated to sell them all; an attempt to marry resulted in the lady clapping another suit on him.

Aubrey endures as one of history's most inspired dabblers. He was an enthusiastic antiquarian and folklorist, an early champion of Stonehenge's anthropological value. *Miscellanies*, the only book he brought to press in his lifetime, lists various myths and suspicions, such as the belief that ringing church bells could stop thunder.

Essentially penniless after losing his estates, he considered going to America or becoming a cleric, then decided that neither would be much fun. Aubrey developed a running list of 62 money-making schemes, among them a plan to open a coal mine. They were all daydreams. He followed through on very little, his habits fitting the profile of what we would now call attention deficit disorder. Various benefactors tried to straighten him out, but Aubrey's biggest advocate arrived centuries after his death, when Dick brought his authoritative edition of the *Lives* into print.

From Aubrey's muddled manuscript, Dick alphabetized and annotated 134 entries, coupling them with an ambitious biographical account of Aubrey that could be a book in itself. But Aubrey's slapdash sensibility can be refined only so much: The abiding complication of the *Lives*, and a large part of its charm, is its unevenness, its impetuosity. His entry on the great literary translator John Florio runs only five paragraphs and reads as dryly as a résumé, but it neighbors a swashbuckling account of William Fleetwood, a royal official saved from almost certain death by the quiet stoicism of his horse.

One learns to take the good with the bad in *Aubrey's Brief Lives*. It's a lively case study in genius and ambition, but also the fallibility that touches Aubrey's subjects, Aubrey himself, and, by implication, the readers who flip through his pages, wondering what will happen next. ♦

B&A

Identity Theft

A Jewish family reclaims its German past.

BY JOSH GELERNTER

I rarely read new books about the Holocaust. Spiking European antisemitism, campus harassment of Jewish students in America, and the stabbings in Israel more than fill my quota for bad Jewish news.

But Dina Gold's new study is an unusual sort of Holocaust book, dealing with the miseries of wartime Berlin but also with her family's lives and troubles over a century-and-a-half—beginning in 19th-century Germany, moving to Mandate Palestine, and ending up in England.

The theme of the story is Gold's struggle to recover a large and valuable office building in the heart of Berlin that had belonged to her grandparents, then to the Third Reich, then to the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), and then to the government of a united Germany. But the theme frequently takes a backseat to tangents and local color. *Stolen Legacy* is also distinctive among Holocaust books in its unusually unpleasant cast of good guys. The author is perfectly honest in describing her flawed and schismatic family: wastrel philanderers and Communists in prewar Germany, irresponsible stiffnecks in Israel, snobs in postwar Britain. The fact that she manages never to sound disloyal to her family shows a certain finesse.

In 1850, Dina Gold's great-great-grandfather, Heimann Wolff, founded the Wolff Fur Company in Berlin. He specialized in dying cheap furs to look expensive, which let working-class men take their wives out on the town looking rich. Soon they were calling themselves "The Leading [Fur] House in Germany" and running satellite offices in Paris, Moscow, Palermo, Copenhagen, London, Manchester, Glasgow, New York, and Melbourne. The Wolffs got wealthy.

Josh Gelernter is a writer in Connecticut.

Stolen Legacy
Nazi Theft and the Quest for Justice at Krausenstrasse 17/18, Berlin
by Dina Gold
Little, Brown, 784 pp., $30

Krausenstrasse 17/18

By the early 1900s, Heimann's son Victor was running the company and moved its headquarters to a beautiful office building in the center of Berlin, at Krausenstrasse 17/18. When World War I began, Victor's son Herbert, an army reservist, was called up and won an Iron Cross fighting on the Eastern Front. The economic collapse after 1918 hurt Wolff Furs, but not fatally. They did business in foreign currency when they could and were insulated by northern Europe's cold winters: Depression or no, people still needed coats.

The Wolffs stayed rich and the kids became dissolute. Herbert's brother Fritz became an enthusiastic Communist; Herbert himself became an enthusiastic playboy. He married Nellie Danziger but didn't give up philandering, which Nellie tolerated out of love for their high-society lifestyle. Herbert's dissolution extended to reckless driving: In 1930 he was driving Nellie's parents when he crashed into a truck he was trying to overtake; the crash killed Nellie's father and crippled her mother.

Gold reports that Herbert and Nellie's marriage was saved by his money. The two escaped whatever sorrows they endured with a never-ending grand tour of Europe; their three children—of whom the author's mother, Annemarie, was the eldest—would be moved from school to school whenever the "well-heeled nomads" were ready for a new city. By age 11, Annemarie had been in 22 different schools.

Like many prewar German Jews, the Wolffs' connection with Judaism was perfunctory. Once a year, on Yom Kippur, Herbert would don his top hat and take Nellie to synagogue. Nonetheless, as the 1930s progressed, the Wolff company was slowly forced out of business by the Nazis, who prohibited Jews from doing business with non-Jews. The family's insurance company transferred Krausenstrasse 17/18 to the Third Reich.

Most German "good Jews," the integrated members of the upper-middle class, believed they could weather the Nazi storm. But Herbert showed uncharacteristic foresight and decided to get out before things got worse. He packed up his wife and children, but couldn't persuade his brother to join them. (Shortly thereafter Fritz was arrested as a Communist and then transferred to Auschwitz as a Jew, where he was killed.)

In the mid-1930s, there were few obvious destinations for Jews fleeing Germany. Herbert decided to take his family to the British Mandate in Palestine. Between what the Nazis stole and the cost of a British "capitalist visa" to enter the Mandate, the Wolffs arrived in Palestine with much of their wealth gone. Herbert quickly lost what remained in a bad investment, and the

COURTESY OF DINA GOLD

Wolffs, like most of Palestine's Jewish population, became impoverished. They moved into a boarding house where all five of them slept in one room. Herbert and Nellie found work where they could.

With a little help, and by selling some of their few remaining possessions, the Wolffs were able to get their two younger children into a Jerusalem boarding school and Annemarie into a school in England. Annemarie thrived in Britain: She became a nurse and married a British Jew then serving in the Royal Air Force, Dan Gold. Their daughter—the author of *Stolen Legacy*—grew up English in England, disconnected from her cousins in Israel and her legacy in Germany. She had heard her grandmother speak about the Wolff Building, but in 1945 it ended up one block into the eastern zone of Berlin, just beyond where the Berlin Wall would be built in 1961.

For a half-century, it looked as if that was that.

The real story begins with the fall of the wall in 1989. Dina Gold, by then a successful journalist, decided to have a look at her family's building, and as the newly unified Germany opened up to reparation claims, she persuaded her mother to try to establish ownership. As might be expected, the German authorities were not especially helpful. First, they tried to prove that the Wolffs had sold their building voluntarily to the Nazis. Then they sought to prove that the building didn't exist anymore: A communicating door had been built in the the wall it shared with an adjacent building; this, it was claimed, made the two structures one entirely new building. Then they tried to prove that because the building had been "altered" since it was confiscated, it was no long subject to the laws of restitution. They also contested the validity of the Wolffs' wills.

Fortunately, Dina Gold was able to find a few good Germans to help her, but they had to fight an uphill battle. How did it turn out? I won't spoil it for you. But if you're interested in a good detective yarn lasting 150 years, *Stolen Legacy* won't disappoint. ♦

B&A

Hell Reconsidered

'Mad Max: Fury Road' earns a second look.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

My friend the movie producer is a major fan of *Mad Max: Fury Road*. He says it's the best film he thinks he's seen in five years. This is interesting, because it's not the kind of movie he makes; he produces "indies," meaning films with relatively modest budgets that center on character rather than spectacle. By contrast, *Mad Max: Fury Road* cost $150 million, has very little dialogue, and has a story you have to piece together in your head because the film itself makes almost no effort to piece it together for you.

My friend the movie producer thinks this is beside the point and that my review of the movie ("Max Redux," May 25) did not do it justice. I had said it was basically one long chase scene, but that "it's an amazing chase scene, and it's even more amazing that the freakish energy of this blockbuster emanates from George Miller, who is now 70 and (one would have thought) too old for this sort of thing. In its scale, invention, and power, *Mad Max: Fury Road* puts all other action pictures in memory to shame." That was pretty favorable, but not favorable enough for my friend. He believes *Mad Max: Fury Road* is a breakthrough in the use of film as sheer visual art, and so he asked me to come over to his place to watch it with him on his own projected movie screen with full Dolby sound and reconsider my judgment.

I said sure because, really, how cool is that?

I was also interested to see it again because the movie has grown in stature since its release, when it received wildly favorable reviews but proved only a middling performer at the box office. Nonetheless, it received 10 Oscar nominations, an unprecedented number for an action picture. Those nominations included one for best picture and one for George Miller's directing.

So here's my report after the second viewing: To my surprise, I think my friend the movie producer is on to something. I did underrate *Mad Max: Fury Road*. It is more than an amazing chase movie. I had a sense of this in my initial review when I said its opening scenes "offer a genuinely startling vision of hell on earth." On second viewing, though, I saw that the whole movie is nothing less than a painterly vision of what a 21st-century hell on earth would look like: a world in which humans have gone feral and have come to be ruled by the sickest among them, men riven with radiation disease owing to a thermonuclear war.

My friend the movie producer compared the visual force of *Mad Max: Fury Road* to a Jackson Pollock; but I think, as a whole, what Miller has achieved here is a motion-picture analogue to one specific work of visual art. It is Pieter Bruegel's *The Triumph of Death*. That 1562 work may be the most hyperactive painting in the Western canon and among the most violent—one in which the sheer accretion of visual detail about the ways in which people can kill and be killed was entirely without precedent. It remains so ghoulish in its imaginative detail one can only wonder at the psychic torments that surely afflicted Bruegel as he realized it.

That is not true of Miller, to be sure,

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

The Triumph of Death *by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1562)*

because he had the example of Bruegel (and Bruegel's near-contemporary Hieronymus Bosch) to work from and because images of human carnage and pestilence—both real and created for other works of pulp fiction—are as commonplace now as they were unimaginable in Bruegel's day.

Unlike Bruegel, Miller wasn't summoning up these harrowing images from his own brain. But they are the work, he has said, of 30 years of thinking about how to make a fourth film in his *Mad Max* series. The multiplicity and variety of them are staggering. And there really is a kind of painterly artistry at work in *Mad Max: Fury Road* that I'm not sure anyone before George Miller has achieved on film.

It's perhaps a strange word to use, "painterly." A painting captures and freezes a moment in time and only suggests action and motion—or in the case of *The Triumph of Death*, a series of frozen moments placed in proximity to each other across the panel, all of which work together to suggest the hopelessness of human existence. *Mad Max* is all action and motion, with only a few moments at which the camera or the people or the vehicles in which they are riding (and from which they often fly off) are at rest. For most of the movie's running time, Miller places these bodies and vehicles in a nearly abstract landscape of red desert and rocks—the "fury road"—and the interaction of the landscape with the people and the metal creates an ever-changing series of tableaux.

Just as paintings are formal compositions that reveal their meaning through the use of space and emphasis on the canvas—where things are in relation to one another, where the use of light effects and brushstrokes is intended to pull the viewer's gaze—so every frame of *Mad Max: Fury Road* seems consciously composed with a painter's interest in directing the eye. And as my friend the producer pointed out, and knows better than I or anyone else who only watches films rather than makes them, Miller deploys every possible version of what might be called a moviemaker's "brushstroke"; he speeds up the film, he slows it down, he enhances its color, he drains its color, he takes advantage of the landscape, he "digitizes" the landscape. And at times he combines these and other techniques in a seamless whole.

That is why my friend the producer said the plot and the dialogue and the acting are not at issue here—that *Mad Max: Fury Road* does things visually that have never been done before. And—this is the key thing—will never be done again, because these are images that belong to George Miller. Credit must be due to John Searle, the extraordinary cinematographer responsible for capturing them, but he was serving Miller's own Bruegel-like vision at 24 frames a second.

If Miller does not win the Oscar next month, it will be a crime. But it should be a crime for which Miller is prepared since, as Max says in one of the movie's few memorable lines, "Hope is a mistake." ♦

"Ever heard of a 'cuddle party'? It's a monthly meeting that allows strangers to explore communication, boundaries, and touch. And these events are becoming popular . . ." *—News item, January 20, 2016*

PARODY

CARY 2, 2016 *ONE DOLLAR CHEAP*

BILL CLINTON IN CUSTODY AFTER 'CUDDLE PARTY' CALL

Host Accuses Former President of 'Pushing It'

By RANDY PRYMAN

DERRY, N.H. — Sheriff's deputies responded to a 911 call from a "cuddle party" Friday afternoon, complaining of a tall man with blue eyes and white hair who was aggressively spooning.

"If you want to cuddle, there are rules," said facilitator Daisy Englehardt. "It's all about touching, but not about, you know—*touching*."

When Rockingham County sheriff's deputy Luke Taggert arrived, he was directed by Englehardt to the man, whose face was buried in the nape of Jody McEvers's neck. When Deputy Taggert attempted to handcuff the man, he was tackled by Secret Service agents. "How was I supposed to know who this guy is?" Taggert said.

Turning away from a flushed Ms. McEvers, former president Bill Clinton insisted the federal agents let the deputy up. "Be nice to him," Mr. Clinton said with a chuckle, "these State Trooper guys and I have always been kinda simpatico."

As he was handcuffed and led away, Mr. Clinton told reporters that "I was up here in New Hampshire to press the flesh. Now, maybe I was just being too literal, but when I heard about the Derry Cuddle Party, it seemed like the perfect thing. What's all the fuss about?"

But Edith Smollett, who attends the sessions regularly, said she became concerned when Mr. Clinton crossed the line from cuddling to snuggling. "Part of the cuddle party experience is to ask people for what you want," she said. "But I never thought I'd hear someone just flat-out say, 'Baby, I wanna get with you.'"

POLICE IMAGE, NEWS.COM

Sheriff's deputies in Derry, N.H., escort Bill Clinton and another accused snuggler to a court appearance the morning after their arrest at a local cuddle-in.

Mr. Clinton emphatically denied that claim, insisting, "Cuddles are one thing, but I did not have snuggles with that woman."

Following an afternoon campaign rally in nearby Nashua, former secretary of state Hillary Clinton was asked about what is already being called "Cuddlegate."

"Look, who are you going to believe?" she asked "Of course, I would normally say that a woman is to be believed, but you have to understand that this Smollett floozy has quite a long record of shady behavior. She has been cited for speeding three times in the last two years—once for going 28 in a school zone, endangering small children. Her 2007 federal taxes were filed almost two weeks late. And in 1995, she tore off a mattress tag that said 'Do Not Remove Under Penalty of Law.' She's obviously just part of a vast,

Continued on Page A7

O'Malley Support Doubles to Four Persons

Candidate's Children Join His Wife, Mother After Negotiations